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THE DERELICT

Doyle let go the line and rushed aft, screaming.

THE DERELICT

By
CHARLES NORDHOFF
Author of "The Pearl Lagoon"

ILLUSTRATED BY
COURTNEY ALLEN

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TO

J. P. JEFFERSON, ESQ., OF SANTA BARBARA

WHO KNOWS THE SOUTH SEAS, AND WHOSE

FRIENDLY INTEREST HAS ENCOURAGED

ME TO SET DOWN THIS TALE

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THE DERELICT

I

THE WIRE FROM SAN FRANCISCO

The summer of 1916 was a perplexing time for us. I remember how unreal the great events in Europe seemed as we read of them in the little San Isidro paper, and how unpleasantly real we found our own small family troubles, resulting from the encroachments of civilization on our hitherto remote and tranquil California ranch.

The Santa Brigida Ranch had belonged to my grandfather and my father after him; they were cattlemen born, who disliked farming and hated to see the country settle up. But nowadays motor cars sped north and south on the new state road that bordered our ten-mile stretch of beach, and the rich level mesas of the coast, which two generations of Seldens had refused to farm, had grown too valuable for grazing-land. Three times in recent years our taxes had been raised, and though the war had sent up the price of beef, my father realized at last that he was playing a losing game. He felt his grip on the old life slipping — perceived that he was faced with the disagreeable choice of farm or sell out.

I had finished school in May and passed my examinations for college, but I did not know whether I was to go to college or not. Many an evening that summer, in our long, dimly lit living-room, we discussed this question and its bearing on our affairs.

My mother argued that I should go to college at any cost. I disagreed, for I wanted to stay on the ranch, and I had suggested to my father that he turn over the management of the farming-land to me, sell off some of his cattle, and keep only as many as the rough hills and the valleys of the interior would support. Several of our neighbors were planting lima beans, — a new crop in our part of the state, — and their success encouraged me to hope that I might do as well. And though I scarcely dared confess it to my father, farming interested me more than the old rough-and-ready cattleman's work.

Lying in his rawhide chair under the smoke-blackened beams of a ceiling built in the days when time and labor were of no account, my father said little and maintained a judicial attitude. I suspected that he leaned to my side of the case, but that he did not like to urge me one way or the other. He was an American of the old breed, a lover of personal freedom and a hater of interference. Ben Selden was the best of neighbors, always ready to do more than his share, but if he had thoughts concerning the affairs of others, he kept them to himself and never offered unsolicited advice.

His brother — my Uncle Harry — was a trader in the South Seas; two years before, I had visited him and shared the adventures of a pearl-diving season on Iriatai, his island in the Tuamotu Group. Every letter from him pressed me to come south again, and my dream, disclosed to no one, was to

give up the idea of college and to spend a year with my uncle as a kind of breathing-time between school and work. I had no intention of being a useless guest, for I understood something of his affairs and of the running of his schooner, and I had learned to speak the native tongue. But now, it appeared, my dream, like so many other dreams, was never to become reality. In early September, with the opening of the college term only a month ahead, my plans were still unsettled.

We were branding our calves that month — a time of hard riding in mountain gullies and remote brushy cañons frequented by cows and calves; days of dust and thirst and the smell of singed hide and burning hair; nights clamorous with the unceasing melancholy bawling of calves. We finished the work on a Saturday night.

I was perched on the top rail of the corral fence, tally-book in hand. Now and then, in response to a shout from the dust and turmoil below, I jotted down a figure automatically, but my thoughts were far away. There is a saying that a man who has once lived in the South Seas can never be happy elsewhere; that sooner or later he is bound to return and end his days in the islands. There may be some truth in this idea; on that day, at least, I found it impossible to dismiss the South Pacific from my thoughts. For the time being, I had had enough of life at home; I longed for the remote peace and beauty of another world. I could close my eyes and see the long rollers tumbling and smoking on the

reefs of Iriatai; see the bright blue ocean, swept by the trade wind, stretching far off to the horizon without land in sight; hear the hum of the same wind in the tops of the palms that line the beach, and smell the odor of pandanus blossoms. I thought of the good friends I had made among the natives: of Fatu, the giant mate of Uncle Harry's schooner; of Marama, the brown boy with whom I had learned to dive for pearls; and I longed to see them once more and to sail among their islands — longed to return, with an intensity that made me feel almost disloyal to my people and the ranch.

A shout brought me back to the world of realities, a hoarse voice proclaiming: "One heifer!"

Our foreman, a stooping, leathery man who had spent most of his life in the saddle, was leaning over a big Hereford calf that bawled and struggled in the dust, with rolling eyes and bloody, newly notched ears. A cloud of acrid smoke hissed up as the brand made its indelible mark; then, with the tip of the iron singeing the hair but not touching the hide beneath, he printed sketchily in small letters on the animal's heaving flank: THE LAST THANK GOD! Glancing up from the tally-book in my hand, I saw my father by the corral gate, astride his big roan horse. For the moment the look of worry was gone from his bearded face; there was a twinkle in his eyes as he watched the little annual rite.

"The last, eh?"

The foreman straightened his back and turned, grinning.

"Yes, sir."

My father made a sign to me and held out a slip of yellow paper. "They sent it from town," he explained.

It was a telegram, addressed to my father from a San Francisco hotel:—

IMPOSSIBLE COME SOUTH CAN YOU AND CHARLIE RUN UP SOON AS POSSIBLE. HARRY

"Come," my father was saying, "there's still time to eat supper and drive to San Isidro to catch the night train."

Long after the other occupants of our Pullman had gone to bed, we sat talking in the smoking-compartment while the train rumbled its way northward along the coast. We were puzzled, both of us. When had my uncle arrived? Why was it impossible to come south? I was too excited for sleep, and my father, usually the calmest of men, was plainly worried. Finally, as a refuge from fruitless speculations concerning Uncle Harry, we began to talk of home affairs, and before we turned in, it was agreed that I was to give up the idea of college for good. My father fell in surprisingly with my farming scheme; there in the dusty smoking-compartment he opened up his mind to me as he had never done before.

"Times are changing," he said, "but I am too old to change. We must hang on to our land — I'm convinced of that. With the mesas assessed at twenty dollars an acre, they're taxing us out of

existence as a cattle proposition. Farming's the only way out, and I'm glad you've got a taste for it, son. You can start in whenever you're ready. I'll help in every way I can. I'm depending on you — to tell the truth." For a man as reserved and taciturn as my father, this was saying a good deal.

I suppose I must have slept an hour or two that night, though I woke in the first gray of dawn and lay in my berth watching the peaceful landscape of the Santa Clara Valley flit past. My father was silent during breakfast in the dining-car; he was reading a San Francisco paper with its accounts of the great battle on the Somme.

The restaurant was still full of people at breakfast when we crossed the lobby of my uncle's hotel and asked for him at the desk. Three minutes later, the boy who had shown us to the elevator was knocking at one of a long row of doors.

"Come in!" The familiar hearty voice rang out as though giving a command at sea. The room was darkened, but as I wrung Uncle Harry's hand, I saw that his eyes were covered with goggles so dark that the glass was almost black, and that his face, usually brown as a Kanaka's, had faded to the pallor of a city man. My father was shocked; he rarely used an oath, but now he burst out: "For God's sake, what's wrong?"

Standing in the dim light, straight and wiry as an Indian, Uncle Harry smiled.

"Oh, I'm going to be all right," he said. "Don't

worry, Ben — I'm not blind by a long shot. Jove! It's good to see you two!"

At that moment a huge brown man stepped out of the shadows and seized my hand. It was Fatu, who had been mate of my uncle's schooner when I had sailed south with them two years before. He saluted my father, and I heard his deep voice addressing me in the Maori tongue.

"So you have come," he said approvingly, "and come quickly! That is good. Seroni needs you. He has spent too many days in the sun with the diving-canoes, and now he has the eye-sickness which you saw among the Tuamotu people. At first I feared that he was going blind."

"It started with conjunctivitis," Uncle Harry was explaining to my father, "a nuisance, but nothing serious. The old story — too much sun. I have n't been able to go on deck except at night. I saw the best man in town before I wired you, and he told me I was in for three or four months of treatment in a darkened room and at least a year of smoked glasses, unless I wanted to ruin my eyes for good. Well, there's one bright side, anyhow — I'll be able to pay you a good long visit at the ranch as soon as the oculist is through with me. But sit down. I must explain the fix I'm in and why I asked you to come north. It was mighty good of you to come, by the way!

"The war's at the bottom of it, of course. It's sent the price of copra out of sight and taken away nearly all the able-bodied men in our part of the world. The copra from Iriatai provides a good two

thirds of my income nowadays, but I've been busy with other things and this trouble with my eyes has made me slack; nearly six months have gone by since I took away the last batch of labor. The island must be grown up with weeds, and coconuts sprouting all over the place. Somebody's got to hurry south, pick up all the odds and ends of labor obtainable, go to Iriatai, clean the plantations, and make the copra. The young palms are in bearing now; there are at least a couple of hundred tons of copra lying around ready to be cut, and it's worth a hundred dollars a ton to-day. The question is, who's to do the job? Down our way, every man worth his salt has gone to the war; if it were n't for my eyes I fancy I might volunteer myself. We 'll be in it sooner or later — you can bank on that. Fatu here has four children, which lets him out, and I practically forced him to take advantage of his exemption."

The giant grinned. Like many natives, he understood more English than he would admit.

"Fatu's absolutely square," my uncle went on, "but he's the world's worst business man. I've taught him to navigate and he's got his master's ticket so he can take the Tara south. But I'm stumped for someone to go with him — to get the labor, keep the books, make the copra, and sell it when it's made. You see what I'm driving at, Ben: Charlie's my only hope. Could he possibly get away for six or seven months?"

My father turned to me, smiling in the dark. He knew how I longed to visit the South Seas again.

"Of course he can get away," he announced heartily. "I'd go myself if I could be of any use to you. He was planning to go to college this fall, but he told me last night that he'd dropped the idea. And there's no rush about getting home; he could stay down there a year if you needed him. The longer he stays, the longer we'll have you on the ranch. What do you say, Charlie?"

My heart was beating so fast that I could only mutter some incoherent response, but my face must have betrayed my feelings, even in that dim light. My uncle's lips curved in a smile.

"Look at him, Ben," he said. "Hanged if I don't believe he *wants* to go!"

We talked till noon, discussing the future and finally swinging round to the war, as every conversation was apt to do in those days. When a man appeared with my uncle's lunch, my father and I went downstairs to the restaurant.

"I'll be sorry to see you go, Charlie," he said, after we had ordered our meal; "this is going to put off your start on the ranch; but when Harry needs us, there's only one thing to do. Don't worry about the farming — that can wait. I'll need time anyway to find the extra capital. What do you think: will you be able to make his copra, or whatever he calls the stuff? It's coconut, is n't it?"

"The meat of the coconut," I explained, "scraped out of the shell and dried in the sun. Yes, I think I can do the job. I'll try my hardest, anyhow."

"I'm sure you will. If I were you, I'd get together

what you need for the trip and start within a day or two. I must go home to-night to look after shipping that lot of calves, and you can leave your good-byes to me. The schooner's loaded and ready to sail. She costs forty dollars a day to run, Harry tells me, so you'd better waste no time."

That evening, after my father was gone, Uncle Harry and I sat late in his darkened room. He had a great deal to tell me concerning the feeding and paying of labor in the South Seas, the weeding of the palm groves on Iriatai, and the conditions on his Tahiti plantation, which I was to visit and report on.

"You'll find things about the same aboard the Tara," he remarked. "You remember old Pahuri? He's still engineer, and Ivi and Ofai are still with me. I've told Marama he's to be mate on the trip south. He's a bright youngster and a first-class seaman. Funny — Marama's a millionaire in the native eyes since he got his money for those pearls, but he likes the life on the schooner and he's been with me ever since you came down. If he wanted to, he could live on his land like a king, with his own cutter boat and a house with a tin roof! Fatu's gone down to the waterfront to sleep aboard. By the way, do you really think you can get off to-morrow night?"

"I'll be ready."

"That's good of you, old man, though I hate to cut our visit short. Then I'll do my best to have your papers rushed through. About labor — no use wasting your time in Tahiti; there's not an able-bodied man left on the island. Try the Leeward Group,

where there's been no conscription for the army, and if you can't get enough men there run south to the Austral Islands. They know me on Rurutu and Rimatara and Tupuai. And don't turn up your nose at women if any strong girls offer to sign on; it's piecework, and lots of them will do as much as a man. Let's see — I explained about feeding them: bully beef and ship's biscuit and sweet potatoes. One other thing: there's a big seine on Iriatai; I always make them take Saturday afternoon off and stock up with fish."

My uncle fumbled with his cigar case, extracted one of the long, thin cigars I remembered so well, cut the end, and lit it with an air of relish. "Strictly prohibited by the doc," he explained, "but I allow myself three a day." He was silent for a time, puffing slowly at his cigar.

"I did n't tell your father," he went on at last, "but there's one little thing in the back of my mind, and it's just as well for you to know about it. You've heard of the German raiders in the Atlantic — armed merchantmen that slip through the blockade? Well, they've not gotten into the Pacific so far and I trust they never will. And I've something else to tell you before we turn in: keep a sharp lookout to the north and east all the time you're on Iriatai. No, I'm not going to explain now — the story's too long. You'll find it in the safe in my cabin, typed out as well as I could. I want you to read it the first day out, get the story clearly in mind, and then stick the manuscript in the galley stove. A thousand to one it

amounts to nothing at all. Anyhow, you'll enjoy the story, though I'm sure you'll laugh at your old uncle when you've finished it." He rose from his chair.

"Bedtime," he announced. "Come and have breakfast with me in the morning."

The next morning was a busy time for me. I had some shopping to do, for I needed clothing for the tropics, and there was no time to send for other things I had left at the ranch. A passport could only be procured from Washington, which would require two weeks' time, but my uncle settled this matter in a conversation by telephone with the French Consul. Once my identity was established, there was no difficulty in getting a consular letter which permitted me to travel in French Oceania. I lunched from a tray in Uncle Harry's room, and before we had finished, Fatu came in to announce that the Tara was cleared, and that he had engaged a tug for two o'clock. When I took my uncle's hand to say good-bye, a bellboy stood in the doorway, loaded with my belongings.

Uncle Harry squeezed my hand. "Good luck, old man!" he said.

Fatu was waiting in the taxicab. "Pier sixty-one," I told the driver, and presently, after a tedious drive down Market Street, we drew up on the dock, where a little crowd was gathered about the schooner's gangplank. Some were curious idlers; others were Kanakas, members of San Francisco's odd little South Sea colony, come to see the Tara

off and to give her crew messages and gifts for friends in far-off islands.

The sight of the schooner brought a small lump to my throat. Like my uncle, I knew her qualities and loved her. She lay alongside the dock, shabby and weather-beaten as I had never seen her before. A gangplank slanted down sharply to her rail. I paid off the taxicab man, and as I turned to get my things aboard, I saw a brawny young native, with flashing teeth and sparkling black eyes, spring ashore with what seemed a single bound. It was Marama, once the Tara's cabin boy, and my friend and companion in many a scrape. He seized my hand in both his own, calling me by my native name.

"Tehare!" he exclaimed, "Fatu told me you were coming with us; I've been on the watch since daybreak!"

At that moment I felt myself seized by other hands. Ivi and Ofai, my uncle's sailors, had seen me from the forecastle; Pahuri was with them, the Tara's wrinkled, cynical, and kindly native engineer. All were old friends; they gave me a feeling of home-coming rather than departure. Presently the last line was cast off; the tug's Diesel engine puffed and snorted; the hawser pulled taut, and the Tara moved away from the dock while the people ashore waved their hats and shouted their farewells.

We followed the tug out through the Golden Gate. The fog was rising in pearly billows above the city, disclosing glimpses of the brown, sunlit

hills across the bay. The Pacific, gray and ruffled by a light air from the northwest, heaved lazily outside the heads. Flocks of wild fowl, in lines and crescents which changed form with graceful undulations, moved southward swiftly under the fog: gulls with white breasts and slate-blue backs wheeled in the schooner's wake, or crowded about bits of floating refuse, calling and quarreling with sounds like harsh, wild laughter. The tug cast off. Aboard the Tara there were shouts in a foreign tongue; blocks creaked as the brown men of her crew swayed at the halyards. Her discolored sails rose, slatting gently, and bellied out as she filled away on the starboard tack.

I stood by the rail, watching the coast of California drop away astern. The breeze freshened; the fog became a drizzle and blotted out the land. My eyebrows were beaded with moisture when I went below.

In my uncle's cabin — now mine — I unpacked my bag and stowed my belongings in the locker under the berth. Then, using the combination I had memorized, I opened the safe, for I must confess that I felt an intense curiosity to read the manuscript Uncle Harry had left on board. With the thick, folded sheaf of paper in my hand, I stretched out luxuriously on the berth. Though it was only mid-afternoon, I remember that I lit the lamp swinging in gimbals at my side. The manuscript, full of errors, gave evidence of the difficulty my uncle had had in typing it, but there was no mistaking the curious story it told.

II

THE DERELICT

About six months ago [my uncle's story began] I had to beat south to Mangareva, in the Gambier Islands, at the end of the Tuamotu. I'd made a deal with a Chinese trader to pick up fifty tons of shell he had on hand, and though the war had knocked the bottom out of the shell market, I'd promised to buy the stuff. The Gambiers are so remote and unimportant that they are seldom visited nowadays; there used to be a lot of diving there, but the patches of shell have been worked out. There's not a white man living in the Group.

I stopped ashore in the village with old Ching Loy, and one evening, while we were yarning on the veranda, a native came up the path and asked to speak with me. He came from Akamaru, one of the beautiful little volcanic islands in the lagoon. There was a white man at his house, he said, a white man who had drifted on to the reef a couple of weeks before, all alone in a small ship's boat. He was in bad shape from thirst and exposure; would I take pity on him and give him a passage north? The Kanaka said the man acted strangely; he believed he'd lost his mind through the hardships he'd undergone. I told him I'd pay him a visit and have a look at his guest before I committed myself.

We finished loading the shell next morning, and

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when the job was done I took the whaleboat and had the men pull me across the lagoon. The white man turned out to be an odd bit of human driftwood, a little, shriveled, red-haired Irishman, with a dazed, wistful look in his eyes, and a broken arm he'd gotten when his boat turned over in the breakers. He stood up as well as he could and held out his undamaged hand. "It's mighty glad I am to see you, sir," he said in a quavering voice. "Captain Selden, if I understand what these Kanakas have been sayin'?" "That's right," I told him, seeing at once that I'd have to do what I could for the poor chap. "Ah, sir, I can't tell you how good it is to see a white face," he went on. "Not that these people ain't been kind to me— they could n't have treated me better if I'd been the King himself. But I can't talk to them, and God knows I want to talk — it might come back to me — D'you know, sir, I can't tell you me own name!" Suddenly he burst into tears.

While he was taking leave of his brown host, I strolled down to the beach, and there, lying half awash in the sun, I found the stove-in wreck of the boat that had brought my passenger to Akamaru. They had towed her across the lagoon, I suppose, hoping to patch her up, but she was too far gone for that. On her splintered transom I discovered what I was looking for — the half-obliterated letters of a ship's name: "Sumbawa," as nearly as I could make it out. The name meant nothing to me, but I stowed it away in the back of my mind.

We sailed the same night, and I put the Irishman to bed in the extra cabin. His arm was in a very bad way, all swollen and purple from the coral poisoning where he'd bashed it on the reef. He was running a nasty fever too, and during the night he went into a delirium and began to shout. Some of the things he said made me sit up and listen. "Holy Mother!" he raved, "I can't stand it no more! All alone, and them dead bodies about! What's that? God help me! They're *moving!* Keep back! Don't touch me! Oh-h-h!"

Knocking about as I have for so many years, a man is bound to pick up a rough knowledge of doctoring. I got out my books and lancets and set to work. When the sick man's arm was opened and the poisonous matter draining out, the fever went down. The natives had made a good job of setting the bone. Then, one morning when I was smoking a cigar in his cabin, the past came back to him. It must have come in a kind of blinding flash; usually he was a great talker and he looked forward to my little visits, I know; but I noticed that he fell silent all at once, and when I glanced up at him I saw that the dazed look was gone from his eyes. He was staring at the coverlet thrown over his knees, with an expression intent, sombre, and far away. "God's truth!" I heard him whisper; "It's Jimmy Doyle I am — I remember it all now! Durban — the Sumbawa — the sickness, and me all alone with the dead!" He looked at me, and I realized that he no longer knew who I was.

I explained to Doyle, very slowly and carefully, how I had come across him on Akamaru, and how the natives had found him by the stove-in boat on the reef. Little by little, in snatches, as the details came back to him, he told me his story. I wish I could set it down in his words. He had an Irishman's gift of vivid narrative, full of color and touched with a flash of imagination here and there. But it was too fragmentary, too disjointed; it took me several days to get the whole of it straightened out and put together. So I'll have to tell it as best I can.

Sometime about the first of the year, Doyle found himself stranded in Durban, on the east coast of Africa, broke and out of a job — what we call "on the beach." He had been a fireman all his working life, but the glare of the fires, helped along by frequent drunken sprees ashore, had weakened his eyes so that he would have been glad of a chance to earn less money as a trimmer. Half starved, and worn out from sleepless nights along the waterfront, he decided to enlist in the army, where he would be sure of three meals a day and some sort of a place to sleep; but they would n't let him join up; his eyes put him in Class C, and men in that class were not wanted. Then he heard of a ship, the Sumbawa. She was a two-thousand-ton freighter, a fine, seaworthy little ship that had been trading in the East Indies. Now she was bound for Panama with a cargo of machinery. I fancy that only the scarcity of men got Doyle his trimmer's job.

Seafaring men have a curious instinct in matters

of this kind; before the end of the first day out, everyone aboard the Sumbawa knew that there was something out of the ordinary about the voyage. Rumors flew from mouth to mouth, until the outbreak of a strange sickness turned their thoughts in another direction. Just what the sickness was I can't say. Doyle suspected that the food and water were poisoned, and muttered darkly of German plots. He had his suspicions of a certain boarding-house keeper in Durban, he told me, a fellow who had refused to take him in on tick, and who claimed to be a Scandinavian.

At any rate, the members of the ship's company began to sicken and die. The symptoms were cramps in the stomach and a splitting headache, Doyle said, and nothing in the skipper's medicine kit did any good. On an average they died within thirty-six hours of the first pains. The first three or four to die were given a decent burial; after that they went too fast to be buried and lay about wherever death chanced to overtake them. Not a man escaped the sickness, and Doyle, who was the last to succumb, was the only one of the lot to recover. He attributed his escape to a barrel of rain water he managed to fill during a thunderstorm.

His convalescence was very slow, mainly because he was afraid to eat the food on board. Sometimes he caught the fish which began to follow the vessel after her fires went out. The ship must have been a proper charnel house, but her only living passenger was still too weak to think of heaving the bodies

overboard. The weather was rough, with squalls of rain out of the northwest. Finally Doyle grew strong enough to take stock of the fix he was in — horrible enough for any man, but doubly so to an ignorant and superstitious Irishman. The horror grew on him; ghosts walked the deck by night while he crouched in the shadows with chattering teeth. He made up his mind that his dead companions would leave him in peace if only he could manage to bury them, so one morning he rigged up a block-and-tackle arrangement and tried to hoist the skipper over the rail. Odd how he clung to the idea of precedence! But something happened while the skipper, who was no lightweight, was in mid-air. Doyle let go the line and rushed aft, screaming, with an arm before his eyes. Clinging to the rail while he drew in long breaths of pure air, — the drag of the Sumbawa's propeller made her drift stern to the wind, — his eye fell on the captain's dinghy, a light, four-oar boat slung from a pair of davits, aft. He knew that he could lower her single-handed, and in an instant he had decided to leave the ship. He had presence of mind enough to fill her keg with rain water, and not to forget his fishing-gear. Working slowly and cautiously, he got her afloat at last, scrambled down one of the falls, cast off, and pulled away with all his might. He had n't an idea where he was or where he was bound — nothing mattered except to escape from the horror of the Sumbawa. And that's all I ever got out of Doyle, for something must have snapped in his mind, overwrought by what he had been through.

So much for Doyle. I turned him over to the hospital in Papeete, but he died there a fortnight later.

Now comes the second part of the yarn. The Regulus is a small British man-of-war that patrols our part of the Pacific. Her skipper, Commander Brixton, is a friend of mine, and one night, not long after Doyle's death, I had him out to dinner at my place. "Selden," he said, when the servants had filled our coffee cups and disappeared, "I've known you a long time, and I'm going to tell you something I've kept pretty much to myself. You're always knocking about the islands; there's a chance that you might come across what we're looking for, or get some word of her through the natives — a survivor perhaps, or a bit of wreckage picked up on some lonely beach. It's this: A British steamer, the Sumbawa, sailed from Durban a long time ago. She was bound for Panama, and she's never been heard of since. The Admiralty would give a lot to have news of her. I'm not at liberty to tell you why, but this Sumbawa business has kept the cables hot right round the world."

I let him finish before I spoke, and to say that he pricked up his ears at what I had to tell him is putting it very mildly indeed. He sprang up and began to stride about the dining-room. "Man!" he exclaimed, "this is tremendous! Mangareva, eh? I wonder how far that Irishman could have drifted in his boat? If he left the Sumbawa anywhere near the Gambier Group, she'd have edged over toward the South

American coast, then north, and finally west with the counterequatorial. Between you and me, I'm a made man if I can pick her up, and by Jove! I'll not forget who gave me the tip!"

That was all Brixton said, and I could n't press him, of course. But it was enough. The Regulus sailed a day or two later, and I had to push off for Iriatai, to fetch my copra and bring the labor back. While I was there I made a discovery that set me to speculating about the Sumbawa again.

The study of ocean currents has always been a hobby of mine. The main currents of the Pacific, like the Japanese current, the equatorial, and the two counterequatorials, are pretty well known nowadays, but there are any number of local currents and eddies still scarcely known at all. The Tuamotu Islands, where I do most of my trading, are a maze of unknown currents, and a knowledge of the way they set a vessel is important to every skipper who has the misfortune to make his living in that group. When I tell you that out of the twenty-odd schooners that trade in the Tuamotu fourteen have been lost in the last twelve months, you'll begin to understand.

In studying ocean currents, you can't beat the old method of the floating bottle, and for years now I've been putting bottles overboard and keeping tab on them as well as I could. They are corked and sealed with wax, and inside I put a printed slip giving the ship's position at the time the bottle was tossed overboard, and informing the finder, in English, French, and Maori, that I'll give fifty francs for the

return of the paper, with information as to where it was found.

Last year the Tara was chartered by a party from the Peabody Museum, who wanted to visit Easter Island. It lies far out to the east, between the Gambier Group and the South American coast, and it's famous for the huge stone statues which stand along the cliffs. There are men who claim that the present people could never have made and set up those statues, and that the island is the last peak of a sunken continent, inhabited long ago by a forgotten race. I've always wanted to see the place, so I jumped at the chance this expedition offered. My passengers did themselves pretty well for scientists, and our supply of empty bottles was so liberal that I set two or three adrift every day when I shot the sun at noon.

Two of them, thrown overboard on the same day about three hundred miles south and east of the Gambier Islands, were picked up by my men on Iriatai. I found them waiting for me when I went to get the copra and take the labor home, and you may be sure that they gave a new slant to my thoughts. Not one bottle, mind you, but two! It convinced me of what I had suspected for some time: that there is a great semicircular eddy on the east side of the Tuamotu, a current that bulges out from the Gambier Islands toward South America, works north seven or eight hundred miles, and then sets west, past Iriatai. If the derelict Sumbawa had passed anywhere near the spot where the two bottles began their voyage,

there was more than a chance that she might eventually be sighted from my island. And Brixton had said enough to make me want to find her; she might have carried a cargo of diamonds from the way he spoke.

Then came the trouble with my eyes. They have grown worse and worse on the way north, and I know now that I'll have to let Fatu take the schooner back. This is written for you, Charlie, on the off chance that you'll be able to return with Fatu and look after things till I am well. Smile if you wish, but don't laugh at me if I tell you to keep a sharp lookout when you're on the island. I know how fast my bottles traveled, and if there are no heavy gales, and the Sumbawa makes anything like the same rate, she'll be due in October or November. And if she does happen to be caught in the eddy, no human being will lay eyes on her till she fetches up somewhere in the neighborhood of Iriatai. That space of ocean is perhaps the loneliest in the world.

Now, last of all, I'm going to tell you what to do if you have the good luck to sight the Sumbawa. The Tara should be able to tow her on a calm day. So, if it's calm, tow her into the lagoon and get her anchored or beached. Then go to Tahiti and notify Brixton by radio. He knows all about Iriatai. If the weather is too rough to tow her, push off in the Tara and keep the Sumbawa in sight. You'll pass lots of coral islands as you work to the west, — Makemo, Tuanake, Katiu, Fakarava, — and sooner or later you'll have a chance to tow her into one of

those lagoons. She must n't be tinkered with by the natives — you'll have to see to that.

Well, I've nothing more to say just now. Burn this as soon as you have the yarn in mind, and of course, say nothing about it to anyone.

H. S.

III

SAILING SOUTH

THE TARA was a typical trading-schooner of a hundred tons, though my uncle, who had built her some years before, had planned his quarters below with an eye to his own comfort. Her saloon was an attractive little place with its bright woodwork, its handsome table of mahogany, and the fresh chintz curtains in the doorways of the cabins to starboard and port. She was two-masted, and like nearly all the schooners in the South Pacific, she carried a leg-of-mutton mainsail for greater ease of handling. With her heavy cargo of galvanized roofing-iron, lumber, and gasoline in drums, she was so stiff that we never once had to reef her during the passage south.

I have crossed the Atlantic on large passenger-steamers with deck sports and music to pass the time, but the hours dragged in spite of everything and I was glad when the voyage was over. At sea aboard a small sailing-vessel, on the other hand, one day follows another with little sense of tedium. Perhaps it is because one is so entirely at one's ease, undisturbed by formalities of any kind. The routine of a ship goes its rounds with a monotony I have always found agreeable, and a sailing-vessel out of sight of land fits her surroundings with perfect harmony. Schools of pelagic fish play fearlessly in her

wake; whales, so rarely seen from a steamer's deck, blow and gambol clumsily close by, ungalled by the churning of propellers. And every cloud, every slant of wind, every symptom of a change in the weather, is appraised by the ship's company with a critical alertness unknown to men in steam.

Within a day or two the simple routine aboard the Tara had become my life, and a very pleasant life I found it. Fatu, the skipper now, had the cabin across from mine, and he and I messed together in the saloon. Marama, a strong, well-grown lad of seventeen, the son of a Raiatean chief, was mate, as I have said, but though I would have liked to have him aft with us, custom forced him to live in the forecastle with the crew. On a South Sea trading-schooner the mate, unless he be a white man, is never one of the afterguard; and discipline is relaxed almost to the vanishing-point. On a British or American vessel the skipper maintains discipline by holding himself aloof from those under him, a system based on man's instinctive fear of the unknown. But on schooners like the Tara, manned by Kanakas, most good-natured and easy-going of mankind, officers and crew live together like a large and somewhat disorderly family. Trouble rarely comes, and when it does it is settled on the spot by the fists of captain or mate. This is possible because of the racial character of the islanders, who can be treated familiarly without breeding disrespect. Fatu, who towered above the tallest member of his crew and could have manhandled any three

of them, gave his commands in his usual deep, gentle voice, and he was obeyed cheerfully.

I found myself rusty in the native tongue at first, for two years had passed since I had heard the pleasant sound of it, and I had been studying other languages. But it came back to me a little each day, till the words I had been at a loss for were marshaled again in the front of my mind. In a fortnight I could converse fluently with Fatu and Marama.

Marama and I, working with the pearl-divers when I had visited my uncle two years before, had had the good fortune to find a magnificent pair of pearls, which we had sold in Tahiti for a handsome sum. One calm evening, as we lay side by side on the cargo hatch, I asked him what he had done with his share of the money.

"Nothing so far," he said. "It is still in the bank, and they pay me interest, so much each year. My relatives bothered me at first; they wanted me to build a little schooner for us, to put up a new church for the village, and many other things. But your uncle always says, 'Wait,' and he is right. I am mate now, and Fatu is teaching me to use the sextant; later on, when I have learned what I need to know, perhaps I shall have a schooner of my own and go out among the islands to buy copra. But I like to be with Seroni on the Tara, and there's no hurry, anyway."

We had crossed the northern tropic the day before. The autumn weather was calm, with light breezes

from the north, and though Pahuri worked every day and part of every night on his engine, there was still much to accomplish before we could count on power to help us along. The engine was a good one, installed in San Francisco nearly three years before; it had done its work long and faithfully, and now Pahuri was giving it a complete overhaul and replacing the worn parts with new ones, sent aboard from the factory across the bay. Our wizened engineer fumed and cursed and fretted, but I knew that in his heart he loved the task and worshiped his pulsating mass of steel and cast-iron in a way a white man could scarcely understand. When it ran, I think he felt that it was alive, and now he was doing his best to breathe life into it. As I look back on those days, it is odd to realize that the repairs to the Tara's engine, combined with the calm weather which delayed our passage, brought about the conjunction of events — timed almost to the hour — which make the story I have to tell. A slender thread, woven of pure chance, seems to run through it all.

As the weather grew warmer, I discarded my shoes and began to dress like the others, in a native waistcloth or a pair of dungarees. Every morning at daybreak Marama knocked at my door, and I went on deck to enjoy the luxury of having him sluice buckets of cool salt water over me. That was a busy hour in the little galley forward, where Lem, our Chinese cook, — a new hand aboard the Tara,

— bustled about among his coppers. Our coffee, grown by my uncle on his own Tahiti plantation, was of the best, and it was shared out to everyone on board. Lem roasted a fresh batch each morning, South Sea style, and the fragrance of it, when a slant of air brought it to my nostrils, used to give me an appetite like a shark's. Presently the cabin boy, a small grinning Kanaka of fourteen, would appear, bearing aft our tall coffeepot and loads of food, hot from the galley fire. Sometimes Fatu and I shared a platter of fish, caught and salted during the voyage north, and prepared by the Chinaman with a sauce of melted butter. On other mornings we fell back on beef out of tins, which Lem knew how to disguise in many appetizing ways. Uncle Harry kept his schooner well stocked with everything that could be preserved without ice.

My uncle never carried a supercargo, finding time somehow to run his vessel and to look after his bookkeeping and business aboard. The trouble with his eyes had put the work far in arrears, and as soon as I got the hang of it, I sorted out the mass of loose papers in his desk and did my best to bring the books up to date. There was our cargo to think of, too; I had the manifest on which everything was listed, but in my uncle's absence nothing had been checked. It was my task to verify the items as well as I could without shifting things in the hold. But I knew that I had ample time, and I must admit that I worked somewhat languidly, for I felt the pleasant relaxation brought on by fine weather

and rich salt air. I was still posting the books when it began to blow from the north.

We had ten days of it while the Tara fled southward before the wind, reeling off a hundred and fifty miles a day. The wind came in prolonged squalls accompanied by rain, and alternating with hot, steaming calms. The semicircle of northerly horizon would turn black as we lay becalmed. Then the inky wall of cloud, towering higher as it drew near, would advance like a curtain over the face of the sea, and presently the first gusts of wind would reach us, speeding the schooner south, while the rain, driving in horizontal sheets, sluiced the scuppers. For an hour, two hours, or even three, wind and rain would continue unabated; then the northern sky would brighten, the wind die away, and the sun struggle through the clouds and begin to shine brassily. When at last the black clouds disappeared for good beyond the northern slope of the world, and the glass in my uncle's stateroom rose to a point that spelled fine weather, we were well south of the Line, with no land in sight, though the Marquesas were abreast of us to the east. It was there that the Tara was becalmed.

I remember coming on deck the first morning of the calm. The air was dry and very clear; the great circle of the horizon was fringed with motionless tufts of cloud, flushing in the sunrise with delicate tints of mother-of-pearl. The Tara's sails hung slack, moving languidly to the gentle lift and roll of the sea. In the course of his morning work

in the galley, Lem tossed overboard an empty beef tin which chanced to fall right side up, and late the same evening I saw it still floating within a fathom of the schooner's side. Fatu had the mainsail furled and the awning rigged over the after deck; early in the forenoon I found him there in the shade, sorting over a lot of pearl-shell lures for catching bonito, and lashing homemade brass hooks to those that seemed to take his eye.

"The men have nothing to do," he said, "and we are in for three or four days' calm, perhaps. I am going to put them to work. Look yonder." He extended his huge bare arm to the east, and I saw what I had noticed before, several flocks of sea birds, hovering and diving a couple of miles away. "It is expensive to feed the crew on tinned beef," Fatu went on, "and like all Maoris, they prefer fish. Seroni never misses a chance like this."

Marama came aft just then, to point out the birds in case the skipper had not seen them. He helped us select two strong bamboo rods from the bundle in the hold, and to rig them with lines — three each — made fast to the smaller end. The lines were of the same length, a couple of feet shorter than the rod, and each one carried a bonito lure, selected to differ in size, shape, and color from its mates. Then a stout bit of cord with three little loops knotted in it was lashed about the butt of the rod, the lines were pulled taut, and the lures hooked into the loops which held them in place. The South

Sea Islander, like the fly fisherman at home, tries a variety of lures before he finds the killing one.

When our tackle was ready, Fatu gave the word and the sailors got the whaleboat overboard. Ivi, Ofai, the cabin boy, and a new sailor named Amaru took their places at the oars, while Marama and I sprang into the stern. Fatu stayed aboard the schooner, and old Pahuri, the keenest fisherman of the lot, stood by the rail in his greasy overalls, watching our departure regretfully.

The light sharp boat foamed off to the east, impelled by willing arms, and as we drew near the birds, Marama and I seated ourselves side by side on the after thwart, facing the stern. A dozen shoals of fish were feeding on an area of three or four square miles, and Marama now showed his skill in directing the men which way to go. "It is no use to make for those boobies," he explained to me; "they are working with a school of albicore, a fish which does not take the pearl shell freely and is too strong for tackle like ours. See those noddies yonder, and the small white terns with them? They have come from the land, which cannot be far off, and they always work with bonito of the size we want. See how they flutter down in companies, close by the sea? They watch the movements of the bonito, and when he drives the small fish to the surface, they are waiting to pounce down and get their share. Ah! squid is their food to-day!"

I saw two acres of calm sea ripple darkly and then burst into spray as thousands of tiny creatures

skipped and leaped to escape the jaws and beaks that menaced them from below and above. And among them, in all directions, I could see the lunge and spray of the bonito, feeding with a fierce eagerness. The men were making their oars bend; we were on the fringe of the school.

Glancing down at his lures, Marama chose one of a pale, silvery iridescence, unhooked it from its little loop, and extended his rod to let it skitter in the wake of the boat. "Slower — slower," he cautioned the sailors, "we are in the midst of the school." I heard him shout, heard the thump of a fish on the floor boards and the rapid drumming of its tail, but I was too busy to see what was going on. One of my own lures was skipping on the surface like a tiny hydroplane, and I saw the rush and plunge of a bonito only a yard or two to one side of it, but the fish paid no attention to my offering. I had caught many a bonito when Marama and I fished for my uncle's divers on Iriatai, and I knew at once that I might trail that particular lure all day without a strike. I swung it inboard, hooked it in place with hands that trembled with eagerness, and unhooked a long, pale, shimmering bit of shell. We were moving at the pace of a brisk walk, perhaps four miles an hour, and my line was scarcely taut when I saw a violent swirl a foot behind the lure. Another swirl and another miss while I clutched the butt of the rod strongly. Then I had him. The thick rod bent as I hove with all my might; a fat, vibrant bonito of six or eight pounds left the water and came swinging

aboard the boat. The hook was made without a barb, and next minute my lure was free and over the side again. A swirl, a strike, another fish — and another, and another, till my arms ached. Then, after ten minutes of work so violent that I had to stop from time to time to dash the perspiration from my eyes, the school sounded suddenly, and the rowers headed our boat for another shoal a quarter of a mile away. Marama and I laid down our rods, panting; four or five dozen fish covered the floor boards and we would have been glad of a longer rest. But next moment, it seemed to me, we were on the outskirts of the second school, plying our rods once more.

As we pulled back to the schooner in the middle of the afternoon, the whaleboat was deeply laden, and I thought of a story told me by a Japanese laborer who had put in two years on our ranch. He had been a fisherman in Japan, and I used to listen with interest to his quaintly worded account of the boats fitted out for bonito-catching. Each little vessel, he told me, carried an old man, a superannuated fisherman, whose sole duty it was to keep watch as the fish came tumbling aboard, and to cry halt when he saw that the boat could carry no more. The fishermen, it seemed, became so excited when the bonito were biting fast, that if left to themselves there was always danger of loading their craft beyond its capacity. I could not repress a smile when I heard this fisherman's yarn, it sounded absurd, and somehow, very Japanese; but to-day, as we pulled back to

the Tara, I realized that the old man's function might be a useful one.

Fatu, who had been watching us through his glasses, was ready for the work of salting down our catch. Bags of coarse salt were piled on deck beside a row of empty casks, and Lem stood by his chopping-block, cleaver in hand. While Amaru cleaned the emptied boat, — no small task, by the way, — all hands went to work with a will. The Chinaman removed the head and tail of each fish with quick strokes of his cleaver. The next man split the fish lengthwise with a sharp knife, making two fillets, one containing the backbone, and from him it was passed on to have the entrails removed and to be given a rinsing in a tub of sea water. Then slits were cut in each fillet and salt well rubbed into the slits and on the raw side. After that the fish went into the casks in layers, packed in salt. We must have put down close to three quarters of a ton of fish that afternoon. At last the casks were full, and I went aft to have a bath and a rest while the sailors cleaned up the decks.

The sun was low and the sea was strangely calm at the end of the long, hot day; the surface of the Pacific was stirred scarcely more than the waters of an inland pond. The beef tin Lem had thrown overboard early that morning still floated close by. Though my muscles ached with the unaccustomed exertion, I remember the deep content I felt as I lay stretched out by the binnacle. I had enjoyed every moment of the day, and my enjoyment was tempered with the thought that our sport served useful ends.

The moment was one of those that come so rarely — when a man seems to glimpse a truth and harmony not perceived at other times, to feel himself, for once, in perfect accord with the exterior world.

Fatu lounged beside me, a cigarette between his lips. He touched my arm, and turning away from the sunset, I saw that he was pointing to the east.

"*E pahi!*" he announced. "A ship!"

IV

THE RAIDER

Off to the east of us, a large three-masted sailing-ship was approaching over the calm sea. She was a square-rigger; her sails were furled, and her powerful auxiliary engine was pushing her along at a good eight knots.

The moon, in its first quarter, was high overhead before the sun went down. Presently, as the vessel drew nearer, I could see the tracery of her spars and rigging and hear the hoarse clamor of a big oil engine's exhaust. Then there were shouted orders; the sound of the engine ceased; the strange ship lost way and floated motionless close alongside the Tara. A deep voice, aided by a speaking-trumpet, hailed us in purest English from the quarter-deck: —

"What ship is that?"

Fatu, standing beside me in the moonlight, turned to me appealingly. He understood the question, but he wanted me to reply. I collected my thoughts hastily. The Tara was of French registry, of course, and I knew that we carried what seafaring men call a general cargo. I put my hands to my mouth.

"French schooner Tara," I shouted, "general cargo, San Francisco to Society Islands!" There was no reply, and it struck me that I was entitled to satisfy my own curiosity. I hailed again: "What ship is that?" This time the answer came promptly: —

"Norwegian ship Bergthora, Christiania to Sydney, through the Canal."

At that moment a searchlight, moving with an air of deliberate scrutiny, began to play over the Tara's decks. Back and forth it went, blinding us for an instant as it rested on Fatu's figure and mine by the rail; moving forward to where the barrels of salt fish still stood on deck. Then I heard another hail from the Bergthora's quarter-deck.

"What have you in those casks?"

"Salt fish," I shouted back, suspecting nothing.

"All full?"

"Yes."

Suddenly, as though at a prearranged signal, there was a great stir and bustle on the full-rigged ship. A row of electric lights, lit as though at the turn of a single switch, illuminated her bulwarks amidships, and half a dozen sailors lowered into place a great signboard, lettered in black on a white background. SEEFALKE, I read, and glancing toward her stern, I saw that a strange flag was being run up her mizzen-mast. It was the German naval ensign, though I did not know it then. Again the voice hailed, but this time in crisp tones of command: —

"I am sending a boat to board you. You will accompany my bosun, bringing your papers."

It was not till that moment, I think, that I realized the truth — that a German raider had made her way into the Pacific at last. In spite of Fatu's imperfect English the same realization must have come to him, for he looked at me in bewilderment and despair. I

shrugged my shoulders. "We must obey," I told him; "there is nothing to be done."

Standing there, naked to the waist and clad only in a pair of dungarees rolled to my knees, I watched the Germans lower away a boat, working with admirable discipline and skill. She struck the water on an even keel, the boat's crew scrambled down the falls, and next minute, at a hoarse, unintelligible command, the oars shot out and she began to move toward the Tara, pulled with a perfection that was almost mechanical. There was a second command, barked out in the same hoarse, bullying voice; the rowers ceased their pulling, the port oars were taken inboard with a snap, and the Seefalke's boat came drifting gently to the schooner's side. The man who sprang over the rail was as sinister a figure as I have ever seen. He was so short as to be almost a dwarf in stature, and his head, small, round as a bullet, was covered with close-cropped bristling hair. His arms, terminating in huge knotty hands, hung nearly to his knees, and the immense width of his shoulders, sloping to a thick bull-neck, gave him a look of deformity. The whole aspect of the man, the jutting chin, the slit of a mouth, the close-set, lobeless ears — can be expressed in two words: strength and evil. He drew himself up and gave us a jeering salute.

"Hochbootsmann Staub," he announced; and then, in broken English: "Vich iss der capitan?"

I stepped forward to speak for Fatu. "He is the captain," I said, "but he does n't speak English. I am the owner's nephew." Staub pointed to his boat.

The Tara boarded.

"Then go, both off you. Der papers — you haff dem?"

"Yes. But wait a moment while I change my clothes." The German shook his head.

"Der Graf von Arnst iss not to be gebt vaiting," he told me harshly, seizing my arm and pushing me toward the boat when I hesitated. Fatu's gigantic body was trembling with anger.

"Say the word, Tehare," he whispered in his own tongue, "and I will wring his thick neck as I would a fowl's!"

The German skipper received us in his saloon, aft. No two men in the world, perhaps, could have presented a more complete contrast than the bosun who escorted us and the tall, handsome, courteous officer who rose from his chair to take my hand.

"Count von Arnst," he introduced himself in Continental fashion, "Commander in the German Imperial Navy."

I murmured my own name, and went on to explain that Fatu was the Tara's captain and that I was an American, her owner's nephew, doing my best to replace him on this voyage. And I apologized for my half-dressed condition, saying that I had been fishing and that Staub had refused to give me time to dress. Commander von Arnst listened with an air of kindly attention and spoke sharply to his bosun before he turned to me again.

"Staub is overzealous," he said with a smile. "You

shall go aboard your schooner presently and bring your men back, with what you need. So you are an American? It is a pity your schooner flies the French flag. And a great shame to sink her too; she's a pretty little thing. But we need your stores — those barrels of salt fish above all. We could n't stop you and then let you go on."

He glanced down at the papers the bosun had handed him, checked with a lead pencil several items on the Tara's cargo list, and pushed the paper across the table toward his man, with a rapid order in German.

"You may go aboard the schooner now," he told me. "Tell your skipper that his men may bring spare clothes and any little things they will need."

When we reached the Tara, I found her crew standing in a little, bewildered group by the hatch, while the Germans, equipped with flashlights, rummaged through the hold and the saloon. The last barrel of fish was already on its way to the Seefalke, and they were working like beavers to get at certain cases of tobacco and cigarettes, deep down in the hold. I learned afterward that their tobacco had been smoked up three weeks before. When I had explained our situation to the crew and told them of Count von Arnst's instructions regarding clothes and other odds and ends, they lost no time in getting forward to open their chests and make little packages of their most prized belongings. I filled my suitcase with what I thought I would need, and asked Staub's permission to open the safe. His grunt seemed to be

affirmative, so I began to twirl the knob with his evil face peering over my shoulder. Finally the doors swung open, disclosing my uncle's books and the cash box with its little store of clean, glittering gold. The sight brought a deep-throated "Ach!" from the man behind me, and his great gnarled hand reached out instinctively. From what I learned afterward of Hochbootsmann Staub, I know that if he had seen the way clear, he would have taken my life without a second thought, for the sake of my uncle's four or five hundred dollars in gold. But he withdrew his hand and turned away sullenly. I slid the money into a little bag, did up the books with a bit of twine, and went on deck, decently dressed and carrying my suitcase.

I wanted to be alone for a while, to have a last look about the Tara, the vessel I loved and which had been my home in the old days. It was hard to realize that she would soon sink beneath the waters of the ocean she had sailed so gallantly and so long; that the strange fishes of the depths would flit in and out of her portholes and that stranger crawling things would creep over the saloon table and lurk in the stateroom where I had once made myself so much at home. Like every other vessel worthy of the name, the Tara was more than a mere fabric of metal and wood in the eyes of her crew; she was a living thing, endowed with a well-defined personality of her own. And now the Germans were going to kill her — kill her and bury her deep in her own element. Tears have never come easily to me, but there were unshed

tears in my eyes when Staub made me a sign to take my place in the boat.

When we reached the Seefalke, Fatu was sent forward, with the other members of the Tara's crew, to the special quarters, reached by a hidden door in the hold prepared for prisoners. A steward took the suitcase from my hand, and I was surprised and somewhat gratified to find that Count von Arnst had given me a stateroom to myself, one of the row that gave on the saloon. I was setting my few things in order when I heard his pleasant voice hailing me.

"Eh, Selden!" he called.

I opened the door, with the little bag of gold in my hand. "Here's the schooner's money," I said. "I thought I'd better save it, but I don't know what my rights are." He smiled.

"Keep it, of course. Surely you don't take us for pirates? But it's dinner-time. Come — I told the steward to set my table for two."

The skipper dined in cozy quarters of his own, next door to the chart-room; the other officers of the Seefalke, including the doctor, had their mess near by. I could hear their guttural German talk, the clink of glasses, a burst of laughter now and then. The two portholes of our little dining-room were open, an electric fan droned overhead, and the table was set with fresh damask and shining silver and glassware. I felt more at home now that I was dressed in clean white duck, but I must have pulled a long face, for Commander von Arnst glanced across the table at me with a twinkle in his clear blue eyes.

"I'm sorry about your schooner," he said kindly; "Fortunes of war, you know! Come — we're not enemies, after all! Try some of this excellent fish of yours."

The Germans must have been on short rations, for our newly salted fish, the innocent and trifling cause of the Tara's loss, formed the principal dish at dinner that night.

Commander von Arnst was a nobleman and a man of means who had followed the sea from pure love of the game. In his twenties he had served as a seaman before the mast on English sailing-ships, and before the war he had sailed his own yacht around the world, working out a new system of navigation — his own idea. And he seemed to take a fancy to me — because of the loneliness, perhaps, that ship's discipline forced on a naturally social man, or because of my frankly confessed love of ships and the sea. No other common interest, no other hobby I can think of, has the same power to draw together men from far-distant walks of life.

I told him how I came to be aboard the Tara, and of my visit to the South Seas two years before, and at last he satisfied my curiosity as to his own presence in the Pacific.

"Our countries are not at war," he said. "If you care to give your word not to divulge what you may see and hear on board, I would like to treat you as a guest. Not to talk, that is, until the war is over. What do you say?"

I gave the promise without hesitation, for, like

many other Americans that year, I thought that there was little chance of our being drawn into the war. The German smiled.

"It will be pleasanter so," he remarked. "Your men are French subjects and must be treated as prisoners. They will be comfortable, for we have no other prisoners just now. Your schooner is the first vessel I have sighted in the Pacific. The Atlantic was getting a bit too hot! But perhaps you'd like to hear about the Seefalke.

"I was educated in England and I fancy that's where I got my taste for the sea. When our Admiralty decided to send out a raider, they offered me the command and you may be sure I wasted no time in accepting. This sort of thing and perhaps the air are the only sporting sides of modern war. I got through the blockade — a farce I must tell you about some day. It makes me chuckle still. Then I set about destroying Allied commerce in the Atlantic. Cargoes of grain, cargoes of nitrate, cargoes of copper and nickel ore — I sent them all to the bottom — millions and millions of marks. What did I do with the prisoners? Oh, I waited till their quarters were full, and then sent them off aboard a captured sailing-ship, taking care to cut down the rig and to put them in charge of the senior captain of the lot. That was not long ago. But my time in the Atlantic was up; too many ships were missing, and the British were hot on my trail, as we could tell from the wireless we picked up. So I rounded the Cape and ran north to throw them off. It's been tremendous sport." The

Count's blue eyes sparkled; I could see that he loved his adventurous task.

After dinner, when the officers gathered in the saloon to drink their coffee and smoke, I met Dr. Lantz, a tubby little man with rimless spectacles and a turkey-red face. Neither he nor Lieutenant Altmann, the mate, spoke more than a few words of English, and as I knew no German, I acknowledged their stiff little bows with a smile, and sat down in a corner while they cracked unintelligible jokes over my uncle's cigars. The excitement of the evening's events was wearing off and I felt a strong reaction of gloom.

The prospect ahead of me was depressing enough, what with the loss of the Tara and the impossibility of looking after affairs on Iriatai. I wondered how well the schooner was insured, and whether marine insurance covered risks of this sort. Then I began to speculate gloomily as to what von Arnst would do with us. It was obvious, even to me, that he would keep us on board as long as possible, for the success of his raid in the Pacific would depend on secrecy, maintained with the greatest care. Each ship he captured and destroyed would add its quota of prisoners in the spacious quarters forward, and he would not let them go unless provisions ran low or there was no more room. Then, I thought, he would either set us aboard a captured ship, as he had done in the Atlantic, or perhaps, if he knew as much as I of the South Seas, he might maroon us on one of the uninhabited coral islands of the Tuamotu Group.

Fish and coconuts would support life indefinitely on such a place, and I knew of several of the Tuamotus that were not visited so often as once a year. The thought of being marooned on one of those barren stretches of coral was not a pleasant one. I resolved that no word of mine should give von Arnst a hint of this very practical idea.

His voice, pronouncing my name, brought me out of my reverie. He stood in the doorway, where he had just dismissed an under officer with a nod. "I say, Selden," he called; "we're going to sink the schooner now. Want to take a last look at her?"

The moon was still up when I went on deck, and its faint light made visible the schooner lying motionless on the calm sea, and the German boat pulling back to the Seefalke. Count von Arnst stood at my elbow by the rail.

"We're trying out some new bombs of my own make," he explained; "ordnance is a hobby of mine. It's harder than you think to sink a ship. Once, off the coast of Brazil, it took us ten hours to do the job."

The lumber in the Tara's hold would have been enough to keep her afloat, and I was not surprised to see that the sea around her was covered with boards and balks of timber thrown overboard by the Germans. The bombs, deep down in her vitals, must have been provided with great lengths of fuse, for the boat reached the Seefalke's side, was hooked to the falls, rose from the sea and swung inboard, while the schooner still floated undisturbed. I could not take my eyes off her, and von Arnst must have felt the

tension, for I heard him mutter under his breath. Then: —

Boom! A deep, racking, muffled explosion shook the schooner from keel to masthead, and agitated the sea. *Boom! Boom! Boom!*

The Tara started and shuddered like an animal that feels a mortal wound. The night was so still that we could hear the sound of water rushing into her hold. Little by little, in a curiously deliberate way, she settled by the stern, and finally, with a movement expressive of the last agony, her sharp bows rose clear of the sea. Next moment she was gone. The ripple soon died away, and the bits of débris and lumber floating on the placid sea were the only signs of the tragedy.

V

BOUND FOR IRIATAI

The time has come to halt in my account of the happenings of that memorable autumn, and attempt to sketch in brief outline the story of the Seefalke. She played a major part in my affairs, as you will see; and her running of the blockade and subsequent raids in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans were among the most picturesque incidents of the war at sea. I had the yarn from the lips of Count von Arnst, and as for the ship herself, I spent a week aboard her and was given every chance to use my eyes. There were certain mysteries in her construction and design; she was in reality a kind of floating theatre — a stage for masquerade and farce that makes me chuckle to-day. And the audience for whose benefit those marine performances were staged was made up of officers of Allied men-of-war.

But I must begin at the beginning, in wartime Germany.

In the fall of 1915, the naval authorities decided to send out a raider to run the British North Sea blockade and sail south in the Atlantic, destroying commerce as she made her way toward Cape Horn and her eventual destination in the Pacific. The special aim was to sink the vessels carrying food and raw materials from New Zealand and Australia to Europe. Count von Arnst, who was an officer of the navy and

who had been bored to desperation with the inactivity of the bottled-up German fleet, was offered command of the raid. To a lover of action, a man of his adventurous temperament, the chance was a godsend; he accepted at once and was ordered to choose a ship from among the captured vessels lying at Bremerhaven, alter and equip her to suit himself, and select and train a crew. The authorities wanted results; very wisely they left the means entirely to von Arnst. He told me that his plan for running the blockade cost him many days of anxious thought.

While he was still undecided about a ship, a submarine brought to Bremerhaven a splendid British sailing-vessel of about two thousand tons, the Matamoros. She was precisely what von Arnst desired. He had her dry-docked, recoppered, equipped with an oil engine of fifteen hundred horsepower, and altered in certain curious ways. Her masts, for one thing, were changed for masts of hollow steel, fitted with hidden doors. Other secret doors gave entrance to the prisoners' quarters in the former hold; bombs, machine guns, ammunition, and a wireless apparatus were concealed aboard; and a pair of 4.2 guns fitted and mounted in what appeared to be the usual ship's pigpen forward. This pigpen was a work of art; its cover, of painted canvas, could be clapped on in a moment, and was provided with odds and ends of sailors' clothing, shirts and worn dungarees, sewn on to look as though they had been hung out to dry. The name Bergthora was painted over the vessel's former name on the day she sailed, and every member

of her crew spoke Norwegian. The commander had learned the language as a boy at sea; his knowledge of how things are done aboard a Norwegian ship was sufficient to deceive the keen eyes of British naval men.

This elaborate camouflage got the false Bergthora safely through the blockade, but von Arnst, who thought of everything with German thoroughness, reserved a trump to play in a last emergency. He had the floor of the saloon torn up and a new floor built in the place of it. The new floor looked innocent enough, but it was in reality the top of an hydraulic lift, arranged to drop abruptly twelve or fifteen feet at the touch of an electric button. The Count smiled as he explained to me what he would have done in case the enemy proved suspicious of the Seefalke.

"Yes, we were stopped by a British cruiser," he said; "we must have been about two hundred miles south of Iceland at the time. Everything was made ready for the officers who came aboard in a boat — even the eighteen-year-old boy I had trained to pose as my wife on such occasions. He lay on the lounge in the saloon, dressed as a Norwegian skipper's wife would dress, and with his head wrapped in a shawl. This lad, who made a perfect woman otherwise, had a voice surprisingly deep, so he had to have an ulcerated tooth for the time being. The Englishmen were good fellows and very sympathetic with the sufferings of the pretty Norwegian girl; they swallowed the bait whole, and left us, signaling best wishes for a happy voyage. But suppose for a

moment that their suspicions had been aroused. My papers, as always, were in perfect order; if they had inquired by wireless whether a Norwegian vessel named Bergthora had left Christiania on the date specified, the facts would have borne me out, for I had not named my ship till I learned that an actual Bergthora was due to sail on the same day. And my cannon and other warlike cargo were stowed in the hold, under a heavy deck cargo of lumber. So the worst that could happen was that the Englishmen might become suspicious enough to send us to Kirkwall in charge of a prize crew." Count von Arnst stopped for a moment and looked at me with a glint of humor in his blue eyes.

"Do you know," he went on, "I almost regretted that we were not ordered to Kirkwall, with a prize crew aboard! I had perfected my plan and drilled my actors so well that almost no chance of failure was left. The usual prize crew in such cases is made up of two officers and fifteen or sixteen men; they would have left me in charge as master, with orders to take the vessel to Kirkwall under their direction. The chances are they would not have allowed me to leave the deck, but my young wife, suffering with her ulcerated tooth, would certainly have been permitted to occupy her stateroom, giving on the saloon. One British officer would always remain on deck, while the other, in all probability, would stay below. The weather was too cold for anyone off duty to stay on deck. Under the saloon floor, on either side of the hydraulic-lift arrangement, were recesses where

fifteen or twenty armed men could be concealed, and I had installed on the navigating deck a hidden electric bell which could sound the alarm simultaneously in every part of the ship. My plan was this: I would wait for my chance, when part of the prize crew was having a meal in the saloon, change hastily to German naval uniform, seize my revolver, and make a prisoner of the Englishman on duty. Then I would touch two buttons, one treating the diners, table, dishes, and all, to a swift fifteen-foot drop, the other sounding the alarm. My armed men, waiting under the floor, would have no trouble with the Englishmen surprised in the midst of their meal, and my deck crew, hearing the bell, would open the doors in the steel masts, arm themselves, and take prisoner any Englishmen who were not below. I would have ordered them aloft, by the way, just before sounding the alarm, which would put them close to the arsenal doors and leave them in a good position to cover anyone on deck. My 'wife' had been carefully trained in a small part of her own; her duty was to seize a pistol at the sound of the bell and make a prisoner of the sentry, if one had been posted at the saloon door. I believe I could have captured the lot without shedding a drop of blood!"

Count von Arnst had enjoyed the adventure of the Seefalke with the relish of a sportsman. He loved his ship, realizing with the regret of a true sailor that she was one of the last of her kind; and the pleasure he derived from her adventurous cruise

was doubled, I fancy, from the fact that he had long since given up his old dream of going to sea in command of a sailing-ship. The Seefalke's mission was one that a sailing-ship, independent of coal, could perform better than a steamer, and so far she had accomplished her task to the Kaiser's taste. Ship after ship, with cargoes of wartime supplies for England or France, had been sent to the bottom with the utmost ease, and one of the things I found most likeable in the character of Commander von Arnst was the note of pride in his voice when he informed me that his raid so far had not cost a single life.

"It has been ridiculously easy," he told me; "most of my difficulties were in my own imagination as I planned what I should do. An innocent-looking sailing-vessel, flying the Norwegian flag, has no trouble in getting close by signaling, 'Please give us Greenwich time,' as the steamer draws near. Then, if she proved to be an enemy ship, I would order her captain to heave her to and come aboard with his papers. Sometimes they tried to make off; of course they could steam two knots to my one, but that is where my little four-point-twos came in. A shot across their bows usually halted them, but two or three times, when that failed, I had to tell my gunners to aim at the vessel's stern. They scored a lot of hits, but luckily no one was ever hurt. Four times out of five, though, the sight of the German flag and the signal *I.D.*, which means 'Heave to or I shall fire into you,' did the work.

We crossed the latitude of Gibraltar fairly close inshore, worked around the shoulder of Africa, and then south, about midway between Africa and Brazil.

"The first sailing-vessel I captured did me a good turn, for while I was yarning with her officers they let slip the fact that they were following new sailing instructions, laid down by the British Admiralty. I saw at once that my best chance of escaping the patrolling men-of-war would be to follow the Admiralty's new course, as any sailing-vessel found elsewhere would lay herself open to suspicion and the closest scrutiny. And I got all the information I wanted by a humorous little scheme of my own. I was always on the best of terms with my prisoners, the officers of captured ships, and they used to ask me what I would do if I were stopped by an Allied man-of-war. 'What a question!' I would reply, drawing myself up sternly. 'There is only one thing I could do — engage her at once.' This seemed to astonish them. 'What?' they would exclaim. 'Give battle with this old windbag! They'd blow you out of the water in a second! And where would we be then?' At that I would smile and say: 'Well, I suppose you'd be blown out of the water too.' This always made them reflect, and they ended by deciding that it would be pleasanter for all hands if we could keep out of the way of Allied men-of-war. In fact, they used to help me lay my course so as to avoid any regions where they thought warships might be on patrol.

"Off Rio we captured a fine four-masted British

barque, with an English skipper and a Norwegian crew. I had found so much work to do in the Atlantic that we were behind the schedule I had planned and short of various things, tobacco in particular. There is never enough tobacco at sea. Well, I decided to take a very great risk, in hopes of replenishing our stores and perhaps of picking up a bit of useful information. I transferred the barque's crew to the Seefalke, manned her with those of my men who spoke Norwegian best, and sailed her right in to Rio! That was sport — yarning with two or three British skippers ashore in the neutral port, and idling on the dock within twenty yards of a British man-of-war, coaling furiously. I was not afraid of my English, for I had learned the language as a child, but two things bothered me: forging the signature of the barque's captain, and the fear that he might have friends ashore who would call on me. But everything went smoothly, and I cleared with what I had come for and with information which made me decide to get out of the Atlantic at once. There was a great stir, it seemed, over the numerous missing ships; the British were convinced that a German raider was abroad, and two warships — one of which I had seen at her coaling — had been ordered to hunt the unknown vessel down. So, when I had found the Seefalke at the point of rendezvous, I blew up the barque and set sail at once for the south. Our last capture in the Atlantic was a full-rigged French ship with a cargo of saltpetre from Iquique; I put her in command of Lieutenant

Altmann, with orders to accompany us around the Cape. Off the coast of Chile we sawed off her top-gallants, dumped all spare sails overboard, and loaded her with our prisoners. Then we set sail to the west, signaling, 'Happy voyage.' Once out of sight, I turned sharply to the north, and we have n't raised a sail or a trail of smoke from that day to this."

During the days that followed the sinking of the Tara, the German ship beat her way south against the dying trade. October in those latitudes is a month of calms and gentle southeasterly airs, a kind of interlude between the season of the true trade wind and the westerly winds of the antipodean summer. It was my first and only experience as passenger on a square-rigger, and the working of the ship interested me. Her skipper seemed to enjoy explaining to a novice the intricacies of her rigging, and teaching me the almost obsolete language of yard and brace and tack. Every morning I was allowed to spend an hour or two with the men of the Tara, moping in the great bare prisoners' quarters in the hold. It was of necessity a gloomy place, dark and not too well ventilated. Lem, once a cook, now took upon himself the functions of jester; neither the dark nor the lack of air bothered him in the least, and he accepted the ups and downs of life with the philosophy of a Chinaman. The others liked him, and his sallies in broken pigeon-Maori raised the only laughter of those days. Cut off from the sunlight which is their element, the

Kanakas seemed to wilt and lose all interest in life; if it had not been for the anticipation of mealtime and the sport of poking fun at Lem, I fancy my uncle's men might have died of sheer ennui. Improbable as this sounds, the reader who knows the race will understand.

I noticed at this time a general slackening aboard the Seefalke. Her decks, no longer washed down each morning, began to look like the decks of a trading-schooner, and great balks of timber were hoisted from somewhere below and piled on the hatches in disorderly heaps. The men, once smart and spruce as the crew of an Admiral's barge, took on gradually the look that comes with unchanged clothing and unshaven chins. Even her officers, I observed with astonishment, had ceased to shave. The mystery was explained one afternoon when I stood by the rail with von Arnst, watching the flying fish skim off in shoals and plunge into the sea like volleys of grapeshot. I turned at the sound of the Count's voice and saw that he was smiling broadly as he touched his chin, on which a four-days stubble sprouted vigorously.

"Perhaps you've been wondering," he remarked, "what has come over my ship and everyone aboard? Well, I see no reason why I should not tell you. We are setting the stage for another performance of our little masquerade. We have learned from the wireless that there is a British man-of-war not far off, and though I am sure she suspects nothing, we may be asked to stop and show our credentials.

I wonder what she can be doing in this part of the world." He turned his head to glance up at the topsails, and lit a cigar before he spoke again.

"And the Seefalke," he went on. "Have you been asking yourself what she is doing here? There can be no harm in answering that question too. Her bottom, as you may have guessed, is very foul — we should be logging at least seven knots now instead of five. I have been studying my charts and have decided to put into one of the lagoon islands of Tuamotu, an uninhabited one, of course, give my men a much-needed run ashore, and heave the ship down for a scrubbing. And when we set sail, I shall have to leave you and your men marooned ashore. I'm really sorry, my boy. I've enjoyed your little visit. But I must dispose of you so that the longest possible time will elapse before your men can talk. Anyhow you'll have a good yarn to tell your friends when you get home. Come along to the chart-room and I'll show you the island I have in mind. I've forgotten its outlandish name."

I followed his tall figure through the saloon door, noting that even the saloon seemed to share in the disorder that had infected the Seefalke like a disease. The floor, which could drop so suddenly and mysteriously at the touch of a button, was unswept; the ash trays on the table had not been cleaned, and the brasswork here and there was sadly in need of polishing. In the chart-room von Arnst swept aside a litter of papers on the table and spread out a German chart of the Tuamotu Group — the vast

cluster of coral islands which stretches a thousand miles across the Pacific, from Oeno in the far southeast to Matahiva at the northwest end. Their names, as I glanced down at them, rang out in my mind like bugle calls: Hereheretue, Nengo-Nengo, Nukutavake, Anuanurunga, Tikehau. The German officer was pointing to a small island out to the east of the group.

"That's the place," he said. "It's marked 'uninhabited.' I wonder how the Kanakas pronounce the name." I looked closely; my heart, which seemed to miss a beat, made me catch my breath.

The atoll half obscured under the tip of Count von Arnst's forefinger was Iriatai.

VI

THE SUMBAWA

That night, lying wakeful in my berth long after the lights in the saloon had been put out, my mind was busy with new trains of thought. I knew now that we were to be marooned — and marooned on Iriatai! There are seventy-nine atolls in the Tuamotu Group, and by sheer chance, the thread of chance which had led me aboard the Seefalke, which was now leading the ship toward Iriatai, and which was not to snap till it had brought about the strangest conjunction of all — Count von Arnst had chosen my uncle's island as a careening-place. Yet, when I stopped to think of it, I could perceive that his choice was less strange than it seemed at first sight. A great majority of the atolls of the group, three quarters I should say, are made up of a complete ring of coral reef enclosing the lagoon. There is no pass, no break through which a ship may enter the still, deep water inside. And of the islands which have one or more passes deep enough for a ship of two thousand tons, all but three or four are large, thickly planted with coconuts, populated, and visited by trading-schooners every month or two. The German skipper desired, first, to careen his ship, and second, to maroon his prisoners; and for both of these purposes isolation was essential. So in reality his choice was limited, and I admitted to myself that

from his point of view he could not have picked a better place than Iriatai.

The Tara was the only schooner that visited the island, and now the Tara was at the bottom of the sea. I smiled to myself, not happily, at the thought of von Arnst's luck. It was not hard to predict what would happen. He would heave down his ship, give her a scrubbing, and sail away, leaving us on Iriatai and taking good care that not a boat or canoe big enough to go to sea in was left on the island. And the time that would probably elapse before anyone came to take us off would exceed his expectations. It would take six or eight months without a word from me — I thought — to stir up the people at home, and my uncle, knowing the leisurely ways of his part of the world, would be the last to take alarm. I knew that the German would leave us any stores he could spare, and that we would run no risk of starvation on an island abounding in coconuts and fish, but I had come south to do a job laid out for me and I wanted to get it done. Anyhow, I thought, there were sure to be axes and bushknives in Uncle Harry's storehouse on the island; we would at least be able to pass the time in clearing and copra-making till a ship came to take us off. I ran over in my mind the personnel of the Tara's crew: Fatu, Marama, Pahuri, Ivi, Ofai, Amaru, the cabin boy, and Lem, the cook. There were six strong men among them, and if I could count myself in that category, we would be seven capable of heavy work. Lem and the boy could at least pick copra out of the nuts. Six months

— eight months — possibly ten — we would be able to get through a lot of work in that time.

Then another thought came to me. Would Fatu and his men be content to stay passively on the island in these stirring times? They were French subjects, and I knew that all of them had relatives fighting in France in the *bataillon du Pacifique*. I had given my parole to von Arnst, whom I liked tremendously in spite of a strong feeling for the justice of the Allied cause, but I had neither the inclination nor the power to force my men to keep silence. The Germans — "Purutia," the natives called them — were their enemies; a Purutia man-of-war was abroad and their first thought would be to communicate what they knew to the French authorities. And unless von Arnst cut down and set adrift every tree on the island, the Kanakas would soon be afloat. The sea is their element; they will go to sea in craft in which a white man would hesitate to cross a pond; and if they can get coconut fibre to make cordage, pandanus leaves for weaving sails of mat, steel or the shells of giant clams for adzes, and any sort of timber to use the adzes on, they will not stop long on any island against their will. No — there would be no copra-making on Iriatai until the authorities on Tahiti were warned that a German raider was at large. On the day of von Arnst's departure from the island, before the Seefalke was hull-down, Fatu's shipbuilding would begin. It would take time, of course, but he and his men would never rest till they were afloat and headed west. Well, they would be

quite right. As French subjects, they had their little part to play in this war which made itself felt in the very ends of the earth. I would sail west with them, I thought, give my uncle the news by wireless, and charter a schooner to carry on his work.

At this point in my reflections, drowsiness overcame me and I fell asleep.

I was awakened at dawn by sounds of unusual activity on deck. Lying in my berth in the dreamy state between consciousness and sleep, I heard the sharp guttural commands of under-officers, the brisk footsteps of men moving at a trot, the slither and crash of heavy objects moved this way and that. Something out of the ordinary was going on.

When at last I roused myself, dressed, and opened my stateroom door, I scarcely recognized the Seefalke's familiar saloon. It was as though I sat in a theatre, gazing at a new scene upon which the curtain had just risen. The familiar outlines of the stage were there, but every detail of the set was changed, and I had a bewildered impression that I had fallen asleep on the Seefalke and awakened on a different ship. As if by magic, the place had taken on a dirty, flyblown look. The cushions of the lounge were covered with ornate things of knitted wool, dyed in hideously contrasting shades and grimy with long use. Great spittoons of tarnished brass stood here and there, and the floor was spotted with tobacco juice. An ugly cage, in which a canary piped and trilled, hung by a woman's sewing table littered with feminine gear; a sewing machine stood near by, and a

young woman lay in a wicker chair, busily knitting a coarse woollen sock. There was a saucer of milk on the floor, and a big gray tomcat I had never seen arched his back, purring as he rubbed affectionately against the woman's ankle. She was young and pretty in a Scandinavian way; her face was very pink and white, and her long flaxen hair hung over the back of the chair in a single thick braid. But even to my eyes she was dressed with an indescribable effect of dowdiness.

On the wall of the saloon, forward, hung ghastly colored portraits of Norway's King and Queen, flanked by a somewhat less libelous picture of the King of England. Off in a corner, on a little table covered with another specimen of Norwegian knitted art, a cheap gramophone of French make, with a battered and tarnished horn, was ploughing its way through a record. The rasping sound of it comes back to me to-day as such things will; the tune was "Tipperary." Finally the music stopped, though the disk continued to revolve, clicking each time the needle struck a crack, and a man — one of the little group I had not noticed before — rose hastily to shut it off. I was so astonished, so bewildered, that I fancy I must have been watching this scene open-mouthed; at any rate I heard a good-natured laugh as heads turned to glance at me. Count von Arnst and his officers were seated at a table, gulping down cups of Rio coffee.

A moment passed before I recognized them, for the actors were as much changed as the scene in

which they now took part. The man shutting off the gramophone was Dr. Lantz, but in his old-fashioned steel-rimmed spectacles and threadbare suit of pilot cloth he might have paraded the streets of his native town in Saxony, secure from recognition by his oldest friend. His fiery jowls were ambushed behind a thick gray stubble; only the small gray eyes, twinkling amid folds of fat, were the same. Both the doctor and the tall, lean, cadaverous mate, Lieutenant Altmann, now unshaven and roughly dressed, looked precisely as they were meant to look — Scandinavian to their finger tips. And they were playing their parts with true German thoroughness: I could hear the singsong of their Norwegian talk as they laughed and chatted over their coffee.

The skipper was the master-actor of the lot. As he pushed back his cup and rose from the table, I could scarcely believe that this was the smart, handsome German officer I had grown to like. The transformation in him was not merely in the outer man, but seemed to be of the spirit as well; his whole manner and bearing were subtly different. All the smartness was gone; he carried himself with a slouch, with slightly bowed shoulders, and a shuffle of the feet as he walked. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, extracted from a torn pocket a huge plug of chewing-tobacco, bit off a corner, and presently aimed a volley of tobacco juice at a spittoon near by. The shot fell short. Then for a moment he raised his mask.

"Hello, Selden," he said with a grin, "what do you

think of us? We're rehearsing the little turn I told you about, and I fancy it won't be long before the curtain goes up in earnest. I'll show you. Come on deck."

Standing by the rail, he raised his arm to point off to the southeast, and low down on the horizon, several miles away, I saw a thin trail of smoke.

"A British man-of-war," von Arnst explained, "the ship we've been on the lookout for. She's the Regulus, my wireless man thinks; I can't make out what she's doing up here. One thing's certain — she's not looking for us. But we're ready for her: papers all straight and ship on the proper course. One look at our deck cargo of timber ought to make them give up the idea of ordering us to raise the hatches, and below hatches is the only place I would n't care to have Englishmen snooping about. They can't do more than suspect the Bergthora; if they smell a rat they may order us to make for Papeete with a prize crew aboard. In that case we'll stage another little turn — the disappearing trick!"

The German turned to me, blue eyes sparkling and a flush visible through the bronze of his cheeks; he had set aside for a moment his part of a stolid Norwegian skipper, and I could see that he loved danger as some men love wine.

"I'm sorry," he went on, "that I can't offer you a seat at our little show. You might prove hard to explain, so I must send you to join your men below. But drink your coffee first."

I can tell little of what happened during the hours

that followed, for I was confined below decks, in the prisoners' quarters of the hold. I learned afterward that the Seefalke was ordered to heave-to and boarded by a boatload of Englishmen who suspected nothing, and whose object in coming aboard was to inquire whether we had seen anything of a derelict ship believed to have been abandoned in this region. They seemed disappointed that von Arnst had sighted nothing, and left, after a glass of whiskey with the captain, wishing him a happy voyage.

Two thirds of the Seefalke's crew were stowed away with us, out of sight in the dark and stuffy quarters where my own men spent all their time. We had been warned to make no noise — a warning enforced by the presence of Staub, who sat by the door aft, scowling indiscriminately at friends and enemies. The other Germans lounged in little groups, conversing in eager, whispering voices. They had been a long time at sea, and the announcement that we were soon to drop anchor at an island where they would be allowed a run ashore had put new life into them. Sitting on the edge of Marama's bunk, with the Tara's crew squatting on the floor close by, I told them in a whisper what our prospects were. My voice was inaudible five yards off, and there was not a chance in a thousand that any of von Arnst's people understood the island tongue.

"The German captain has told me," I said, "that we are heading for Iriatai. He has chosen that island because it has a pass and because it is marked 'uninhabited' on his charts. He plans to run into

the lagoon, heave his ship down, clean her bottom, and then sail away. We shall be left on shore. I am sure that he will leave us what provisions he can spare, for he is a kindly man, but you may be sure of one thing: not a boat nor a canoe of any kind will be left. He is kindly but very wise, and he knows that the longer we are forced to stay on Iriatai, unable to tell the French of what we've seen, the freer he will be to do his work in this sea."

The gigantic skipper of the Tara smiled.

"Let him take away his boats," whispered Fatu; "let him take away Seroni's whaleboat and all the canoes, and the tools, and the oars, and every bit of canvas on Iriatai! Let him leave not so much as a copra bag! With fire and adzes of *pahua* shell we can cut down trees; we can make cordage of coconut fibre, and sails of matting, made of pandanus leaves. And there are nine of us — the work will not take long. But if the chance comes we must hide an axe or two!" His eyes sparkled at the prospect, and I saw that his excitement was communicated to the others. Only the Chinaman, Lem, seemed unaffected by my news. He took the ups and downs of life as they came, confronted adventures and hardships as he had faced the dull routine of his duties in the Tara's galley, with a cheerful and slightly cynical tolerance.

Presently, after what seemed a very long time, an under-officer came to speak to Staub, and I was allowed to go on deck with von Arnst's men. The sky was overcast; the Regulus was hull-down in the

north, and we were running before a freshening northeasterly breeze.

I found von Arnst at lunch. He told me in a few words what had occurred, but the morning's animation was gone from his manner and he seemed preoccupied. "A damned nuisance, these chaps!" he said. "I've got to hold on this course till we're out of sight of them. And the weather has a dirty look."

The wind continued to freshen that afternoon, but when we tacked at about four o'clock and bore away to the southeast, the long easterly swell was gone, and the Seefalke made grand going with the wind abeam, sailing a flat, gray, choppy sea. There was land to windward, the maze of reefs, lagoons, and half-drowned land called the Tuamotu: the Dangerous Archipelago. Von Arnst must have known his position to a dot, for he drove his ship all through that night in a sea where countless vessels have been lost, and where the oldest trading-skipper is apt to snug down at sunset. Toward evening of the following day I had a glimpse of the land, — Makemo, perhaps, — a place where the tossing line of the horizon ceased to toss, where presently, before it faded in the dusk, I could make out the long, dark level line of palm tops, like a trail of dirty smoke dividing the grays of sea and sky. Von Arnst was standing at the rail.

"If the wind holds," he remarked, handing his glasses to the steward who had fetched them a moment before, "we shall raise our island to-morrow morning."

I was long in getting to sleep that night, for my mind was afire with anticipation and busy with memories of Iriatai. Only two years had passed since the day when I lay on the Tara's deck and watched the island sink below the horizon to the east, but two years are an eternity when one is young, and my memories of the place were merged with those of a happy childhood, of that period in every man's life when the world about him is all rose and gold. Good fortune had come to me there and adventure such as not every man has known, but as I looked back on those days, seen through a veil of pure enchantment, it was hard to realize that Iriatai was a part of our material world set down on charts, and known at least by name to every sailor of those seas. And it was harder still to realize that within twelve hours I was to see its palm tops once more and the snowy line of breakers along the outer reef, to sail in through the passage I knew so well, and to see far away across the shimmering lagoon the islet where I had once helped to scoop out two shallow graves. There is always a tinge of sadness in revisiting a place where one has lived intensely in the past. Lying halfway between sleeping and waking, I wondered whether I should be disappointed if we sailed on and on until the German captain gave up the search and announced that there was no land where we should have raised the palms of Iriatai.

I was up and on deck in the first gray of dawn, while all the others, saving the watch, were still below. The wind had shifted a little during the night

and a procession of dark ragged clouds moved steadily from north to south. A long, uneasy sea swung past us, for we were on the eastern fringe of the Tuamotu, on the verge of the vast open ocean that stretches away to the South American coast. I shivered, standing there in my pyjamas, for the wind was strong and now and then a dash of spray flew over the weather rail. I was turning to fetch a coat from my stateroom when I heard an unintelligible shout forward and saw the man at the wheel straighten his back and raise his eyes to gaze out over the sea ahead. A moment later the skipper appeared on deck, followed by Altmann and Dr. Lantz, all in pyjamas like myself, and all carrying glasses which they promptly clapped to their eyes.

A single quick glance sent Count von Arnst aloft; he went up the mizzen shrouds like a boy and I saw him perched there far above the deck, gazing ahead with an intensity that surprised me. I supposed that they had sighted Iriatai, though it struck me that a mere landfall should not cause all this bustle on a ship navigated as the Seefalke was. Then I saw what the others saw — a dot, a speck, which appeared and disappeared rhythmically on the sea, to windward of us and several miles ahead. Von Arnst shouted an order from aloft; the sailors off watch came trotting from the forecastle, tightening belts and hitching up trousers hastily pulled on; little by little the Seefalke edged up into the wind, crashing into the head-sea as her sails were close-hauled and sheeted home.

Straining my eyes to windward, I watched the

remote speck grow and take form in the increasing light. Whatever it was, it was adrift and bearing down on us before the wind. At last, in the full gray light of a stormy morning, I could make out a funnel and a pair of stumpy masts, and each time she rose on the crest of a sea, the hull of a little steamer of fifteen hundred or two thousand tons. She drifted stern to the wind, pitching aimlessly as each swell caught her, passed beneath her keel, and dropped her into the trough behind. Presently I saw that no breath of vapor rose from her funnel, which, like her sides, was red with streaks of rust. A raffle of standing rigging, broken or rusted through, swayed from her mastheads as she pitched, adding the last touch to her air of forlorn abandonment. I turned at the sound of von Arnst's voice. He had climbed down to the deck and was standing at my side.

"A derelict," he said, offering me his glasses. "Want a look at her?"

I raised the binoculars, and the abandoned ship, now about three quarters of a mile away, seemed to spring into the foreground. The vessel was in a sorry state indeed — abandoned, filthy, unkempt. Now and then, as she swung into view and rolled a little, I could see that her bottom, below the water line, was bearded with thick green weed. The door of the chart-room on the bridge flew open, seemed to hesitate, and closed, only to swing open again; and as I watched the ghostly movements of this door, a large sea bird, which had been perching on the rail of the bridge, took wing and sheered off swiftly to

leeward. This was a derelict indeed, given over to the sea birds and abandoned by living men.

A word seemed to ring out like a shout in my brain: "Sumbawa!" I felt a sudden heat of excitement; my hand shook as I returned the glasses to von Arnst.

"She looks like a freighter," I said, doing my best to speak calmly. "I wonder why she was abandoned?" The German shrugged his shoulders.

"She must be the vessel those Englishmen were asking about. I suppose they wanted to sink her. If these were peace times I'd tow her into Iriatai."

My mind was working in a kind of feverish despair. I knew, as surely as if I had read the letters now obliterated on her bows, that this abandoned ship, drifting within a mile of us, was the Sumbawa, and I knew that my uncle would give a great deal to have her safely beached in Iriatai Lagoon.

"How far are we from the island?" I asked.

"Twelve or fifteen miles." Von Arnst seemed to be in a good humor this morning.

"If you've a minute to spare, sir, may I ask a great favor of you?" He nodded, smiling, and I went on before he could speak.

"You told me that you were going to leave us on Iriatai, and I can see your point of view. You are at war and forced to leave us where my men's mouths will be closed for as long as possible. I know these islands; I've lived on them, and please don't think I'm complaining when I tell you that we'll probably have to spend a year or more on Iriatai. The schooners

don't come out this way. For a year, or eighteen months, or two years, we'll have to live on what the island affords: coconuts and fish. We shan't die of starvation, but the diet is monotonous. Would it be too much to ask you to tow that ship in and beach her? There might be tobacco and other things you need, and she must have a lot of tinned stuff that has n't spoiled. It would be a tremendous help to us."

Count von Arnst clapped me on the back; his good nature made me half ashamed of what I was concealing from him.

"It never occurred to me," he said heartily. "I was planning to give you what we could spare, but that won't be much. We can steam for a dozen miles as well as not; every ship we capture seems to be full of oil. I'm glad you spoke."

He turned away to give a volley of orders. The Seefalke was manned like a frigate of the old days and most of her men had served in the Chile nitrate trade. It was a fine sight to see those old salts spring aloft, to see the canvas melt from her yards. Presently, above the droning of the wind, I heard the hoarse deep rumble of her oil engine. When all sails were furled, von Arnst took the wheel and signaled for full speed ahead.

The drifting vessel was now dead to windward of us. The Seefalke, breasting the head-sea strongly, steamed up to a position close by the derelict. I saw Hochbootsmann Staub muster a boat's crew and superintend the lowering of a double-ended boat. They pulled away over the lumpy sea while a man

on the after deck paid out a long, light line. Staub was the first to scramble over the rail of the derelict; he made the line fast, beckoned four or five of his men to come aboard, and with a wave of his hand ordered the rowers to return. Backing and moving forward from time to time, the Seefalke held her position beautifully. While the boat pulled back to us, a group of sailors came aft with the end of a great hawser, which they made fast to Staub's light line. At a word from von Arnst, an under-officer waved his cap and I saw Staub wave his in answer. His men gathered about the hand-windlass the Sumbawa carried against emergencies; they began to move rhythmically, the line tautened, the hawser crept like a great snake along the deck. Those Germans were seamen, and I knew enough to appreciate their skill.

Half an hour passed, I suppose, before the hawser crept aboard the Sumbawa and was made fast. At last Staub's squat figure appeared on her after deck, waving abnormally long arms as a signal that all was ready. The Seefalke's propeller churned, the hawser tautened, and little by little the derelict's bows swung round. Our speed increased; a moment later she was moving in our wake, a hundred fathoms behind.

VII

LANDFALL

MAN is a land animal, and when he has been many months at sea he feels a longing, which only those who have experienced it can understand, to touch the bosom of his Mother Earth. He sickens of the instability of perpetually moving decks and longs for the feel of good solid ground beneath his feet; and if his mind is fanciful he is apt to decide that the man who bestowed the old apt name of *terra firma* must have led a seafaring life.

Von Arnst's men had been a long time at sea and the excitement of our approaching landfall was felt throughout the ship. Altmann stood by the skipper, stepping nervously to the rail from time to time to peer ahead; fat Dr. Lantz did his best to read a novel in the saloon, but gave up the attempt and came on deck; half the ship's company stood in the bows, gazing ahead. We were making about four knots, I suppose, with our tow.

I was all hot with the excitement of our meeting with the derelict and the luck of getting her towed in, and added to this were the emotions of approaching Iriatai once more. Iriatai! A beautiful word, not easy to explain in the white man's tongue. It means literally "skin of the sea," the flat surface of the ocean, that is, stretching away to the far-distant line where sea meets sky. But it expresses to the

native mind the idea of distance, of remoteness, and perhaps this explains how the island, far out and alone on the easterly fringe of the Tuamotu, got its name. I murmured the word under my breath, and the musical sound of it brought a keen rush of memories. Next moment I turned at a confused noise of shouting; a sailor perched high in the rigging had sighted the land. Before long it was visible from the deck, a dark line no more than a hair's breadth above the horizon, and level as the horizon itself. Von Arnst touched my shoulder.

"Come into the chart-room," he said.

I followed him through the saloon and into the little room where a large-scale chart was spread out on the table, a chart marked "Die Tuamotu Inseln: Iriatai." It struck me as almost uncanny that von Arnst should possess such a chart, that the German Admiralty should have taken the pains to map this dot of land at the very ends of the earth.

"You have visited Iriatai?" the skipper was asking me.

"Yes, sir, I once spent a diving-season there."

"Good!" He beckoned me to come nearer, took up a pair of dividers, and went on without looking up: "The pass is on the southeast side, and there are shoals here and there. Do you think there is any risk in running in to-day?"

With the Sumbawa in mind, I had been thinking of the passage and my answer was on the tip of my tongue. "No, sir," I said confidently, "not if you hug the eastern side of the pass. But there will be

a current running out, with this sea, two or three knots." Von Arnst laid down the dividers and straightened his back.

"The island is marked 'uninhabited'," he said. "Do you think we shall find people there?"

"Not at this time of year. They come sometimes to make copra, but I doubt if we find anyone in the hurricane season."

My words seemed to remind von Arnst of the weather, for he turned quickly to tap the glass of a barometer hanging on the wall. The needle quivered and sagged away a little to the left. He frowned.

"There's dirty weather on the way," he remarked, "scarcely a hurricane in November, though they have been known to come as early as this. Well, I must be getting on deck."

The island was well in view when I reached the rail, and the Seefalke's course had been changed to take her round the southern end. I could see the breaks of reef between the long islands surrounding the lagoon, the dense verdure of the thousands of palms my uncle had planted, and the tops of the taller palms planted by the native woman from whom he had bought the atoll years before. The sea flattened as we approached in lee of the land, but before long I could see the white line of breakers nuzzling at the outer reef.

Iriatai is an atoll — a low coral island made up of three long, narrow, curving strips of land, surrounding a lagoon some ten miles long and eight across. The three islands are separated by the pass and by two

short stretches of reef, awash at high tide; and they have names of their own: Ragi to the east, Koro on the north, and Tamanu to the south and west. The land is nowhere more than a few yards above sea level.

The wind was almost north and the sea was calm as we skirted the southern shore of Tamanu, but when the passage separating that island from Ragi came into view, I saw that a strong current was running out of the lagoon. The Seefalke swung offshore, turned on a wide arc, and headed into the pass. We were in the grip of the current now; the water swirled and eddied about us, breaking in little crested seas. Von Arnst took the wheel and signaled the engine-room. The mutter of the big oil engine changed to a hoarse roaring. Along the shoals to the west of us the seas were racing forward under trails of spray that hung in the air like smoke and toppling in vast turmoils of white. Midway between the islands, where the pass is too narrow for a ship to turn, the current grew so strong that the utmost speed of our engine was not enough. For a full minute the two coconut palms standing in line on the east end of Tamanu seemed not to change position by an inch. I heard von Arnst shout, saw a sailor come running aft with an axe in his hand. They were preparing to cut the towing-hawser. Then, aided by a sudden flaw of the current, we began to move ahead once more, little by little, almost inch by inch at first, faster as we entered the lagoon and turned to the west. Halfway to the

village of my uncle's laborers, at a place where there are twelve fathoms of water over a sandy bottom close inshore, the Seefalke's speed slackened, the hawser was cast off, and the anchors of both ships went to the bottom with prolonged rumblings of chain.

Stern to the land, the German ship lay almost motionless, though the fresh northerly breeze sent whitecaps dancing across the lagoon and slapping on the beach. It was strange to walk decks which no longer heaved to the lift of the sea. Von Arnst seemed to share the general elation at the prospect of getting ashore. His handsome face was flushed and smiling as he strolled to where I stood gazing at the land.

"A beautiful place!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm, "and the anchorage could n't be better. I'm sending Altmann ashore to make camp for us under those big trees yonder; I'll start lightening ship at once. We'll heave her down for a scrubbing as soon as the weather improves. How about water, by the way?"

"You can get fair water by digging almost anywhere on these islands; there is a well in the settlement where the people live when they come to make copra. Look, you can see the roofs." I pointed to where a cluster of thatched roofs was visible a mile to the west of us.

"Then we'll dig a well of our own. I say, Selden, why not get your men ashore to-day? There's one condition, if you can make them agree to it and

Aided by a sudden flaw of the current, we began to move ahead once more.

force them to keep the agreement: They may stop in the deserted village, but come no closer until we are gone. They're natives, of course, but they're French subjects after all. Have a talk with them. I'll miss you, my boy, but I'll have to ask you to stop ashore with your men. You can go any time you want if they agree to the bargain." He smiled at me and turned away. "I must get to work," he said over his shoulder.

I wasted no time in getting forward to the dark stuffy quarters of the prisoners. The man on guard by the door admitted me, and at the sound of my voice the men of the Tara sprang out of the bunks where they had moped so long. The Kanaka, though he has never heard of it, is a rigorous follower of the old Spanish proverb: "Never run if you can walk; never walk if you can stand; never stand if you can sit; never sit if you can lie down."

Marama seized my arm.

"We are in Iriatai lagoon?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes," I answered in the native tongue; "and I have a message for you from the German captain. As you know, he has kept you imprisoned here because you are French subjects and he does not want you to see what goes on aboard his ship. But now, he says, you may go ashore with me to live in the village on Tamanu. You may go, that is, if you will promise to stay in the village or beyond; not to come closer to where the ship is anchored until she has set sail to depart. And remember that if you give your promise I shall be held to account for its

keeping, so do not answer lightly. This is a German man-of-war, and Germany is at war with France. What do you say?"

"Will they be long on the island?" asked Fatu in his deep voice.

"I know no more than you. Two or three weeks perhaps."

The skipper of the Tara glanced at the faces of his men. All save Lem's yellow and impassive visage were alight with eagerness to get ashore. Pahuri, the wrinkled engineer, spoke out.

"*Aué!*" he exclaimed with a violent nod. "I would promise any man anything to get into the sunlight once more. I think that another week in this place would kill me!" The others nodded in quick confirmation, and Fatu turned to me.

"You see how they feel," he said, smiling, "and I agree. Why should we hesitate in making the choice? Tell the captain that our word is given, and ask him to make haste in setting us ashore. I would promise more than he asks for a drinking-nut and a dish of fresh fish."

"Make ready to go ashore then," I told them.

An hour later we stood on the beach by a pile of our belongings, while the boat that had landed us pushed out through the surf of little waves. Von Arnst had promised his men a run on land and a rest as soon as the ship was lightened, and they were working like ants along the beach, floating ashore the heavy timbers which had been piled on deck, and plying back and forth with the Seefalke's

two big power boats. I saw Lieutenant Altmann superintending the pitching of his tents in a grove of magnificent barringtonia trees, and waved a good-bye to him as we took up our light burdens and set off for the village, a mile away.

We had lost our schooner and now we were to be marooned on one of the loneliest islands in the world, but neither the past nor the future weighed on our spirits as we walked briskly along the beach. The Tara's men exchanged jokes, laughed aloud, and drew in long breaths of clean salt air; they seemed happy as schoolboys off for a picnic. Only Pahuri, the oldest of the lot, was thoughtful. He sniffed the breeze and cast frequent glances at the clouds scudding overhead. Finally he spoke to me.

"I think there is a storm on the way," he said seriously; "if we had the 'parometa' — the thing like a clock that hung in the Tara's stateroom — we could make sure. The moon is full, and the fierce winds and furious seas come only at the time of the full moon."

Marama, with his two friends Ivi and Ofai, had outstripped the rest of us, and we found them rummaging through the deserted houses of the copra-makers. Nothing of value seemed to have been left, but as I set down my blanket and bundle of clothing in the thatched hut that looked newest and cleanest, I heard a shout. Ofai appeared in triumph, brandishing an axe with a broken handle, which Fatu promptly claimed. Amaru, my uncle's new sailor, a slender active man, picked out a slant-

ing coconut palm loaded with nuts, and walked up the sixty-foot bole, his body bent nearly double, hands clasping the rough bark against which the soles of his feet were pressed. A moment later he began to throw down nuts: first the dry, fully ripened ones of the lower bunches, then the green drinking-nuts, which he sent down spinning like rifle bullets to prevent their cracking on the rocky ground. The others were raking stones and ashes out of the native oven under a tumble-down shed; I could see that we were going to have a feast. Marama was going from man to man collecting the bits of twine to be found in every sailor's pockets; he soon had enough to make a pair of short lines, strong enough to hold fish of ordinary size.

"Come," he said to me, grinning with the pleasure of his new freedom, "let us try to catch some fish while the others heat the stones and make pudding of grated coconut. I am starving for fresh food. But what shall we do for hooks?"

Exploring a heap of rubbish, we found three or four long, slender nails in a broken packing-case. In five minutes we had ground the points of two of them sharp on the bits of hard coral that lay all about, and bent them into the curious incurved shape of the native hook, so that the pull of the line drives the point deep into the fish's jaw, taking the place of a barb. I stripped off shoes and stockings; we waded out through the shallows to the fringing-reef which borders the beach at this place. Von Arnst had been more than kind to me, but it was

good to escape from the restraint inevitable among the officers of any man-of-war. The fringing-reef drops off in a vertical cliff of coral into ten or twelve fathoms of water, and I chose a place just at the edge, where I could stand on a slab of rock, ledged there by some storm of long ago. The sky was gray, and the north wind, carrying a spit of rain at times, had raised a heavy chop in the lagoon. As a wave receded, I saw a big limpet fast to the stone I stood on; I opened my clasp knife, pried him off before the next wave came, and baited my homemade hook. The fish of Iriatai had been unmolested for many months, and I had not long to wait for a bite. I felt a nibbling jerk, struck to drive the point home, and found myself fast to one of the big snappers called *tamure* by the Tuamotu people. They are strong fish and I had to play this one very carefully, but he came to the surface at last and was strung on the yard of line hanging from my belt. Marama had caught a small rockfish of the *wrasse* kind, a delicacy in Polynesia, and I was amused to see him stop his fishing, fumble for his knife, scale the fish and eat it raw, as if it had been a stick of celery. He caught my eye as the last of it disappeared, and grinned.

At the end of an hour we had more than enough fish to feed nine hungry men. The others had been busy during our absence; in the fashion of Kanakas, they were going to celebrate as well as they could this first day of freedom. They had swept clean the floor of the largest house in the settlement and

covered it with a hastily plaited mat of fresh green palm fronds. Broad leaves covered a space in the middle; this was to be our table, and a drinking-nut, husked but unopened, was set in place for each man. The stones in the oven under the cook-shed were red-hot, and a dozen leaf-wrapped packages of sweet pudding, made from coconut, were piled near by. Our fish were welcomed with exclamations of pleasure; they were cleaned and scaled hurriedly and wrapped in leaves. Old Pahuri raked the stones out of the oven; the packages of food were laid on the heated earth, the stones replaced on top of the food, and the whole covered with a thick mat of leaves. In another hour our meal would be ready.

Fatu touched my arm and drew me aside.

"I must speak with you," he said gravely when we were out of earshot of the merrymakers. "They are like children to-day, and there is no need of spoiling their pleasure. But Pahuri and I think that a hurricane is coming. See — the wind is shifting a little, and the squalls of rain come faster all the time. There is nothing to fear in wind, but if the sea makes up and Iriatai is in the centre of the storm, we shall be in great danger on this low land. I have sharpened the old axe Ofai found, and this afternoon I shall make a new haft for it of hard wood, for we may have to take refuge in the palms. Remember this, Tehare: if the sea rises, stay close to me. I have lived through two hurricanes when many others were drowned and I will show you what to do."

I had not taken Pahuri's words very seriously; like other old men, he was inclined to be a pessimist. But Fatu, the best seaman of the lot, turned my thoughts to the weather. I left him with a nod and strolled through the increasing rain to the beach. Certainly, I thought, the clouds were taking on a dirty look. They sped past overhead in an endless procession, their edges ragged and their centres darkening to an unwholesome shade between green and violet. The squall-blown drizzle had changed to a steady pelting rain, slanting down at an angle with the wind; the two ships, dimly seen through the rain, were beginning to pitch a little, for the sea was making up on the ten-mile stretch of lagoon to windward.

Standing in the warm rain, in the shelter of a scrubby *purau* tree, I wondered what the Germans would do if the storm developed into a hurricane. If they put most of the Seefalke's cargo ashore, she would be too tender to carry sail, too light and cranky to lie hove-to in a storm. And from what my uncle had told me of tropical hurricanes, it struck me as a risky business to try to ride one out at anchor inside the lagoon. If the sea rose, I knew that it would breach clean over the reefs and the low land round about. Well, it was none of my business, after all; the fate of the other ship interested me more, and it was a comfort to think that, no matter what came, she was inside the lagoon. At the worst, she might be beached or sunk in shallow water.

I heard a shout, the native summons to a meal: "*Haere mai tamaa!*"

Only a man who has been long at sea can appreciate the blessing of fresh food. I knocked off the top of my drinking-nut, drank the cool liquid inside, and scooped out the sweet white jelly lining the shell. Our fish, fat, flaky, and steaming from the oven, was excellent, and best of all was the pudding of grated coconut. The others ate with great smackings of their lips and sighs of content; it is ill-bred in their eyes to eat noiselessly, for that signifies that one is not enjoying one's food.

At last I struggled to my feet, ready for a siesta. The wind was increasing to a gale, and the rain had become torrential, a choking, blinding deluge that flew in almost horizontal sheets. The tall old palms of the settlement were swaying and bending to the south, their fronds streaming like banners in the gale; and the sound of the wind in their tops was like the deepest bass note of a great organ. I made a run for my house, changed to dry clothing, and stretched out on the fresh green mat Marama had plaited for me.

It was late afternoon when I woke, but the light in the house was so dim that I thought night had fallen. Fatu had me by the shoulder and was shaking me very gently. The natives never waken a sleeper suddenly, for they believe that the soul leaves the body in sleep and must be given time to return. Little by little consciousness came back to me. I opened my eyes.

"The Germans are coming," said Fatu when he saw that I was awake, "the captain and some of his men." He had to shout to make his words audible above the roaring of the wind.

Von Arnst, dressed in oilskins and a sou'wester hat, was trudging up the beach, followed by a little group of sailors. They were bent under the burdens they carried, and the pressure of the wind made them walk slowly, like men with drags chained to their feet. I ran out into the rain to meet von Arnst.

"Wild weather!" he shouted in my ear. "May I come in?" His men carried a variety of bundles and small packing-cases; he motioned them toward the house where we had feasted before he took shelter with me.

"I've brought you a few little things that may help out," he told me when he had stripped off his dripping oilskins, "matches, flour, lard, and so on. And you'll find a bit of stuff on the derelict, if this gale ever blows itself out. She has a cargo of machinery, but nothing much that's of any use to us. There's quite a lot of tinned meat among her stores. By the way, she's the Sumbawa — Durban to Balboa. I can't make out what has happened to her; she's a mystery, and a tragedy's been acted out on her decks. Staub found dead men scattered all about — shreds of clothing, and bones picked clean by the birds." The German officer was silent for a moment; his face, beaded with moisture, wore an expression unusually grave.

"I must be getting back," he went on. "There's

a hurricane somewhere about; let us hope that it will pass at a distance. But if we are in its path — " He shrugged his shoulders and smiled at me. "I walked up the beach partly to warn you. If there is a sudden calm and the clouds break overhead, and then all at once the wind begins to blow from the south and west, look out! The sea will breach right over this low land."

Commander von Arnst pulled on his oilskins and took my hand in a hearty clasp. "Good luck, my boy!" he said as he turned away to summon his sailors.

Men of his kind are all too rare in the world. He was a seaman and a gallant gentleman, and I like to think of him on that evening when he found time, in the midst of the storm and the anxiety of his position, to walk a mile along the rain-lashed beach, bringing a load of provisions and a word of kindly warning for a youngster of another race, whom he had met only seven or eight days before.

I never saw Count von Arnst again.

VIII

THE HURRICANE

THE GERMANS were not a hundred yards away when Fatu's gigantic figure appeared at the door, beckoning me to follow him into the storm.

"It is a hurricane!" he shouted, bending close. "If we are in its path the sea will cover Iriatai. We can stay in the houses to-night, but we must not sleep. Look — I have been making ready while there is still daylight."

The village lane which separated the two little rows of huts ran almost north and south, and I saw that Fatu had taken a coil of heavy rope I had seen hanging in one of the houses and stretched it about a yard above the ground, along the middle of the path. The end toward the lagoon was fast to a stout purau tree; the seaward end was tied to a sturdy young coconut palm, thirty feet high. Fatu had hacked off all the fronds of this palm, leaving only a cluster of their heavy butts, perhaps a yard long. Another palm, not far off, had been treated in the same way. He was pointing to the palm at the end of the rope.

"That is yours," he explained, "and the second one is for the Chinaman; the others are Maoris and can look out for themselves. If the sea comes, waste no time. It will be dark, so dark that you will not be able to see your hand before your eyes. Feel your

way to the rope, and never let go once it is in your grip. Then go to your palm, climb it, and seat yourself astraddle of the frond butts. I think you will be safe there, but remember to keep your back to the wind."

Fatu was turning to leave me when I called him back. It was growing dark and I did not like the idea of spending this wild night alone in the house. "Come in and stop with me," I said.

We had no lamp or lantern of any kind, and the night, before the moon rose, was as dark as Erebus. We sat side by side close to the door, and though Fatu was invisible, there was comfort in the presence of another human being close at hand. By good fortune, a growth of low, strongly rooted trees broke the force of the wind; without them our rude shelter would have been blown away. The wind shifted little by little to the northeast, and was blowing so furiously that the palms were beginning to go. Now and then, above the deep roaring of the gale I could hear the report of a snapping bole, feel the coral beneath us tremble at the impact of a ton of wood and green stuff hurtling down before the wind. I thought of the ships at anchor; wondered whether the Seefalke could hold her own with a lee shore close astern. They would have two anchors out by now and the engine going full speed ahead — their only hope if it continued to blow this way. There must have been a tremendous sea on the outer reef, but no sound of breakers came to my ears, filled with the deep organ-note of the wind. The rain was not

like any rain that I have seen. It was as if great tanks were being emptied overhead, and the water flew past in bucketfuls, parallel to the earth. Presently the scudding clouds to the eastward became visible in a faint silvery light; the moon, which was one night past the full, was up at last.

The light put new heart into both of us. I rose, stripped off my coat, and shouted in Fatu's ear: "The German ship — perhaps she has gone ashore!" Standing outside in the lee of the house, with the water sluicing off my shoulders, I peered across the bight to von Arnst's anchorage. At first I could see nothing; then, in a momentary lull of the rain, I made out the Seefalke, pitching heavily, with her decks illuminated as though for a fête. As we stood there, straining our eyes for a glimpse of the other ship, the wind and rain began to slacken and the moon shone through a break in the clouds. It was at that moment that I saw the Sumbawa; she had dragged her anchor and gone aground close to the German's camp.

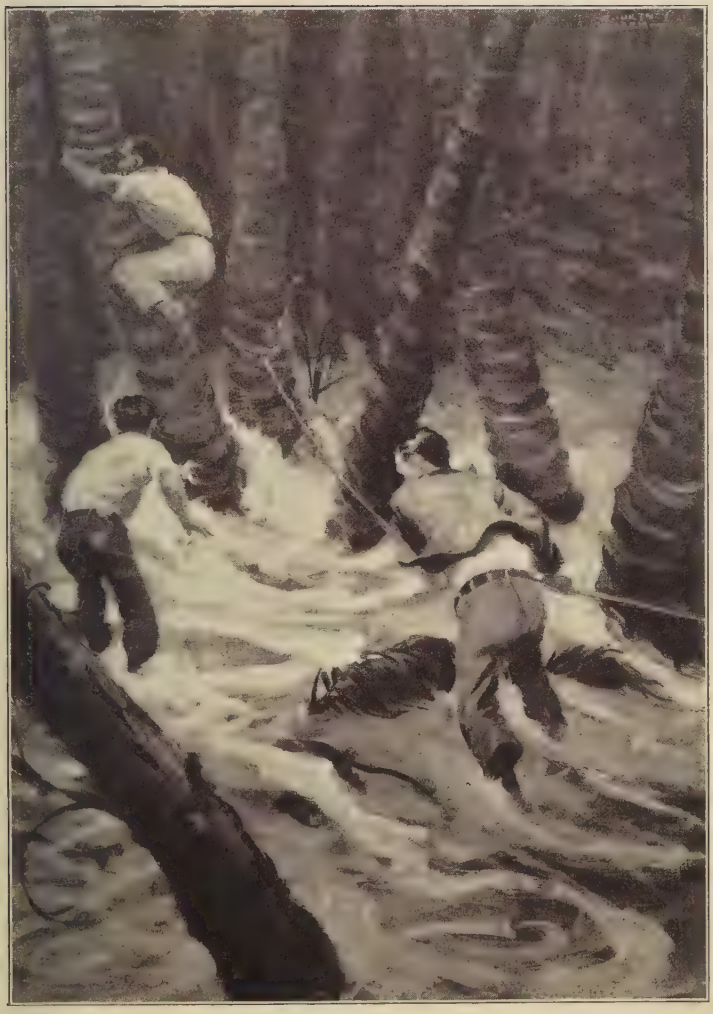
The rain ceased altogether; the clouds broke and scattered; and presently the wind died away to a calm. But now the roaring of the hurricane was replaced by a sound deeper and more menacing: the thunder of a gigantic sea, bursting along the outer reef. It was strange, after the furious turmoil of wind and rain and thrashing palms, to stand there in the tranquil moonlight while the coral beneath my feet shook with the battering of the swell.

"We are in the centre of the storm," said Fatu, a

note of anxiety in his voice. "Ah! The sea rises! Quick! Waste no time!"

A rush of water, little more than ankle-deep, passed over the land to pour into the lagoon. Fatu went off at a trot to warn the others, while I dashed into the house to fetch my coat. As I stepped out of the door, a second wave came tearing through the underbrush. The water was not deep, but I was not prepared for its force. I lost my balance and was rolled ten or twelve yards before I could regain my feet. Then, thoroughly alarmed, I made a dash for Fatu's rope. A third wave was coming, a white, foaming wall, ripping its way toward the lagoon. I grasped the rope strongly, allowing my body to trail with the rush of the sea, stood up as I felt its force slacken, and ran squattering through a foot of water for my palm. I must have been very close to panic, for I have no memory of climbing the smooth thirty-foot bole and seating myself among the chopped-off fronds.

Perched in another palm close by, Fatu was shouting to me anxiously, "Tehare! Tehare! You are all right?" The others were exchanging reassuring shouts; all were safe in their places of refuge, though Lem, the Chinaman, was the only one I could see clearly in the moonlight. He waved to me, looking like a featherless, ungainly bird, crouched in a rude nest of sticks. The sea rushed swirling and waist-deep about the boles of our palms. Then, suddenly as it had ceased, the wind began to blow — this time from the south.



I grasped the rope strongly.

There was a light gust that set the palms to swaying, and another gust, stronger than the first, was followed by the full fury of the storm. The floodgates of the rain were opened once more, and the clouds, rushing past from the south, blotted out the moon. There was no more shouting now, for no man who ever lived could have made his voice audible in that uproar of wind and sea.

My palm was a young one, no more than thirty feet high, and with its fronds chopped off there was little to catch the wind. I was perched securely with my arms about the central clump of butts, my back to the storm as Fatu had directed, yet the stout bole swayed so wildly that there were moments when I feared it might give way. The old sixty-foot palms of the settlement were going down fast — snapping and driving off to leeward in the wrack. For a long time, hours perhaps, I thought no more of my companions nor of the Germans; my mind was numbed, overwhelmed by the old primitive struggle to live. The storm, furious before, now seemed to rave in a passion of destruction. Never before or since have I seen the wind blow as it did that night; it seemed to bruise the muscles of my back, to tear and clutch at me as though the air were full of invisible hands. But as the hours passed and I found myself still breathing and able to cling to my perch, I began to gain a little assurance.

My first thought was of the Seefalke.

I turned my head so that my right cheek took the full force of the storm. The rain had ceased, though

the wind seemed to blow harder than at any time before, and a ghost of moonlight glimmered through the clouds. Ah, there she was, a dim pitching blot on the lagoon, her decks outlined by sparks of electric light. But something was wrong. I took my bearings hastily and looked again. There could be no doubt; the German ship was dragging her anchors. Then, forgetting my own situation as I watched, I saw that she was moving astern, creeping to leeward before the force of the wind. The sea was breaching clean over the narrow land, and the ship pitched so wildly that the strain on her ground tackle must have been enormous. Little by little, in jerks each time her bows heaved high in air, she was moving away from the land. By the end of an hour she had shifted her position a good three hundred yards, and then, drawing in my breath sharply, I perceived that her cables had given way at last. Slowly at first, but with a speed that increased with each second she sped off to leeward and was lost to view in the storm.

Toward morning, as the centre of the hurricane moved off to the west and south, the wind began to abate, and when the ragged clouds to the east took form in the gray pale light of a new day, it was blowing no more than a stiff gale. And the tremendous sea, which makes up in the dangerous semicircle of a hurricane, had passed on to do its work of destruction elsewhere. Fatu was sliding stiffly down the bole of his palm.

It was not until then that I realized how stiff and sore I was. Every joint and muscle of my body

ached; I felt like a man who has been beaten and left for dead. My legs were numb; my back seemed to be one great bruise; the cheek I had turned to the wind to watch the Seefalke was puffed and swollen like a black eye. When I ventured to release my grip of the palm and stretch my arms, the pain almost made me cry aloud.

Little by little, the light grew stronger. The sea, under its gray canopy of clouds, still ran very high, a smother of white along the outer reef and breaking as far as the eye could see offshore. The lagoon was torn by fierce currents and lashed into foam by the wind. Masses of wreckage — palm tops and uprooted trees — dotted its surface here and there, moving out swiftly with the tremendous current rushing seaward through the pass. The land across the lagoon was still invisible, but Tamanu, the island on which we had managed to survive the hurricane, presented a spectacle which made me marvel that I was still alive. The palms were down by hundreds, their trunks, of wood so heavy that it will not float, piled up in windrows of inextricable confusion. Thousands of the younger palms were still standing, but their tops, torn and draggled by the lashing of the wind, told me that on this part of Iriatai, at least, there would be no copra-making for years to come. And the innumerable ripe nuts which had been lying about the day before had disappeared. Time alone could repair the immense amount of damage done.

Then I thought of the Germans; more than half

of the Seefalke's company must have spent the night ashore. Turning my body stiffly with sharp twinges of pain, I peered across the bight. The Seefalke was gone, and no trace of the Sumbawa remained. She had dragged her anchor and gone ashore during the height of the northerly wind, and the rising sea must have dislodged her, I thought, just before the wind began to blow from the south; perhaps both ships were aground on the shoals scattered about in the lagoon. I strained my eyes to gaze out over the torn waters, but there was no sign of either ship. Presently, glancing back toward the anchorage, I saw what my inflamed eyes had not made out before: the Seefalke's two big motor boats, one behind the other, a hundred yards from the beach. I could see men crowded on the thwarts, and now and then, when the wind freshened in a strong gust, the hawser between them and the land rose clear of the water and smacked down in a line of spray.

I disengaged myself from the perch where I had roosted so long, and slid down the bole of my palm, very slowly and carefully, like an old man.

My uncle's sailors were gathered in a little group near by, all talking at once, as natives will at such a time. They thought of nothing but the wonder of having lived through such a storm. Their eyes were bloodshot, and their faces haggard with the strain, but they were recounting their experiences of the night with the animation of children. Their talking ceased as I appeared; they seized my hands, touched me, patted me with the spontaneity of

savages. I was aware of a current of rich human sympathy; in times of stress and disaster man learns the soundness of his fellow men. Fatu was speaking, his deep voice dominating the hum of the wind.

"We have been waiting for you, Tehare," he said; "it is time that we thanked God for preserving us through all the great wind and the sea."

Simply as a child, the huge captain of the Tara went down on his knees, and as we knelt about him, he raised his voice in deep and solemn tones: —

"*E te Atua e*," he prayed, "O, God, look down on us, Thy children, and receive our thanks. We thank Thee for having preserved our lives through the hours of darkness when the sea raged, and since Thou hast preserved us, help us to be better men from this day on. The prayer is finished. Amen."

The deep respect of the kneeling men, and Fatu's simple words, pronounced with a faith which was unmistakable, impressed me powerfully. When we rose to our feet, each man busy with his own thoughts, there was a moisture, not all of the wind's making, in my eyes.

All of us, I think, had forgotten the unfortunate Chinaman, but his voice, rising shrilly above the wind, brought him to mind with a start. He was shouting to me; he had an odd way of calling all white men "John."

"Eh, John!" he called. "Me wantchee come down — no can do. Leg, arm, allee same dead."

After a moment's debate, Marama swarmed up the palm with a bit of the rope which had parted

during the night. He made one end of it fast under the Chinaman's arms, passed the other end over the butt of a frond that stood out horizontally, and lowered it to Fatu who was waiting below. Then he helped Lem to disentangle himself from his roost, and a moment later our cook was dangling in air while Fatu paid out line.

Lem collapsed in a heap on the sand, but he managed to grin up at me while the natives massaged his helpless legs.

"Iliatai no good," he commented dryly. "Hullicane no good!"

They worked on him, in the skillful fashion called *taurumi*, for half an hour before he could walk, and when that time came we began to think of breakfast, a problematical meal. Not a trace remained of the settlement nor of the stores von Arnst had left for us; we had no means of making fire, and nothing to cook in any case. And there is no greater producer of appetite than lack of sleep. Ivi and Ofai were prowling about in the wreckage, searching for stray coconuts. The ripe dry nuts, like those to be seen in any grocery at home, will float like corks before they are husked, and there were none left on the island; but a good many heavy green nuts were lodged here and there among the wreckage, and we made our breakfast of these, drinking the water and eating the sweet pulp. They are a poor substitute for ham and eggs, but almost as nourishing.

Stiff, weary, and too numbed for thought, I stretched out on the damp sand in the lee of a pile

of wreckage and fell asleep. It must have been close on noon when I awoke. The clouds were gone, and the wind had dropped away to a gentle southwest breeze. I lay in full sunlight, and the feel of it, drying my clothes and penetrating my sore muscles, gave me a delicious sense of warmth. My uncle's men, some asleep and others conversing in low tones, lay about close by in the sun. When I stood up, rubbing my eyes, I saw that the German boats were at anchor by the beach, and that a man in the uniform of a sailor was approaching us, picking his way through the wreckage, a small sturdy man, with blue eyes and a pleasant, weather-beaten face. I had seen him once or twice aboard the Seefalke, but had not spoken with him before.

"You're all O. K.?" he inquired as he drew near.

"Yes."

"You fellows are lucky! Hell to pay last night, huh? Say, Lieutenant Altmann wants to see you."

I turned to Fatu, who was regarding the German curiously. "The German officer has sent for me," I explained. "I am going now, but remember your promise and wait for me here."

My companion talked steadily as we made our way toward the boats. He had spent twenty years in America, and Altmann, who seemed anxious to speak with me, had chosen him as interpreter.

"We're kind of broken up," he said; "the ship's gone with everyone on board — God knows where! And five of the crowd ashore were lost. Doc Lantz — you knew him, a good old bird — he's gone. And

Staub, the bosun, he must have been drowned too. But the boys forward ain't shedding no tears for Staub—not so you could notice it. The skipper's the man they're thinking about. Count von Arnst was a regular guy! Say, how did you fellows get by? Up in the palms, eh? I suppose them Kanakas know how to work it. We had a hell of a time! Remember last night the Old Man brought some stuff up here for you? Well, when he got back he managed to get aboard the ship; that was before the sea came up, and she was right in the lee of the land. But the wind! Holy Moses, how it blew! They had two anchors out and the engine going to keep her from dragging, but it was n't enough. When the sea came up we did n't know what to do till the mate thought of the boats. Then we chopped down a couple of husky palms, made a kind of bridle on the two stumps, and rode it out at the end of a long line. If them stumps had pulled out — Wow! While we was rigging up, a sea would come booming across the island every once in a while and carry someone away. I saw the poor old Doc go and two other men. There was nothing anybody could do; we was too busy hanging on to anything we could get hold of! The bosun must have been washed away, but nobody saw him go. We thought he was too hard-boiled to drown. Say, if I live to be a hundred, I'll never forget the night we put in in them boats! Wind howling; dark as hell; sea coming right over the land, and us expecting the cable to snap or them palm stumps to pull out every minute! Holy Moses! If I got gray

hairs I ain't surprised. 'Silver threads among the gold,' huh? With the sea slopping in over our bows and the rain coming down solid, we had to keep four or five guys bailing all the time. I never knew what rain could do till last night — you could n't hardly breathe. Well, we made the grade somehow, but what's next? Most of our grub is gone. The only thing we got plenty of is oil for the engines; it was in drums in the boats. I wish't this war was over and I was back in the States!"

We were approaching the German camp, or rather the piled-up coral and wreckage which covered the pretty spot where they had pitched their tents the day before. I saw the tall figure of Lieutenant Altmann directing the salvage of the green coconuts scattered here and there. He turned, gave a curt order, and stepped forward to take my hand. "All gone!" he said gravely, shrugging his lean shoulders, and waving an eloquent arm in a gesture which embraced the desolation ashore and the cove where the two ships had anchored side by side. He turned to my companion and spoke rapidly in German.

"The lieutenant says he's got to hunt around the lagoon to see if there's anybody left alive," explained my interpreter. "You told the Old Man you'd been here before. Do you reckon the current's too strong to start now? And could you pilot the boat?" I glanced at the landlocked waters of Iriatai; vast quantities of wreckage still drifted about, but the breakers on the outer reef were calming down and the lagoon was navigable, with a little care.

"Yes, I know the island," I said; "we can go now if the lieutenant wishes; I'll pilot him."

Altmann nodded his satisfaction, seemed struck by a sudden thought, and spoke again. "Got anything to eat up your way?" the sailor asked. I shook my head.

"He's going to give you a can of beef," the man went on. "Do you want to eat it before we start?"

I said I would take the food and divide it later with my men, and for the first time the German officer smiled. He beckoned me toward the beach.

The two motor boats were anchored close inshore, beautiful craft, double-ended and with the lines of the old Yankee whaleboats, but with more freeboard and greater beam. They were equipped with heavy-oil engines of ten or fifteen horsepower, and as we waded out through the shallows to the nearer boat, I saw a mast and sail on the thwarts and a drum of fuel-oil standing amidships. Other drums, just now taken ashore, lay on the beach. A mechanic had lighted a gasoline torch and was applying the flame to the cylinder-head; presently, when the iron was hot enough to ignite the spray of thick black oil, he opened a valve, admitting a rush of compressed air to the cylinder. The flywheel spun, there was a stutter and a roar as a cloud of black smoke poured out of the exhaust.

Our anchor came up, I took my place in the bows, and at a word from Altmann we moved off to the north.

IX

MAROONED

In the old days, when it had been my task and Marama's to provide my uncle's divers with fish, we had explored every cove and channel of Iriatai Lagoon, and the topography of its shoals and "horse-heads" of coral was indelibly impressed on my mind. Altmann had explained through his interpreter that he wanted to make the circuit of the lagoon, starting with the eastern side.

I stood in the bow, keeping a sharp lookout ahead and directing the helmsman with waves of the arm to port or to starboard. We crossed the main channel leading out through the pass, where the current still ran fiercely; we turned east till we were as close as I dared approach the inner beach of Ragi, and followed the contour of the long, narrow island as it curved to the north and west.

The average width of Ragi is no more than two hundred yards and its length about nine miles. The southern end of the island seemed to have escaped the full fury of the hurricane, which must have moved on a comparatively narrow path, narrower, at any rate, than Iriatai Lagoon. Only a few of the palms were down, though the thousands standing had been severely damaged by the wind. But at the end of an hour we came to a sharply drawn line of destruction, where the heart of the cyclone had passed across

the lagoon from south to north and struck the land once more. The palms were down by hundreds here, and the sea had rushed across the land so fiercely that no soil remained — only a wilderness of bone-white coral, washed clean and dotted with the jagged stumps of coconut palms. The trunks, in spite of their enormous weight, were nowhere to be seen. They had been carried clean over the land and into the sea beyond. And though I scanned the beach carefully with a pair of glasses loaned me by the German officer, I could see no trace of the Seefalke anywhere. Toward two o'clock, when we were opposite the stretch of low reef which separates Ragi from Koro, we had not sighted so much as a drifting spar. At the height of the storm, this break in the ring of land must have been dead to leeward of the Seefalke's anchorage, I thought; here, if anywhere, she would have fetched up on the rocks. But where was she? The same thought must have struck the Germans, for Altmann was speaking with his men and pointing to the reef, over which the sea washed, waist-deep.

The speed of our motor slackened and I heard the voice of the sailor who longed for peace and a return to "the States."

"The lieutenant," he was explaining, "says the ship ought to be piled up somewhere along here. She ought to be here, but she ain't. And if she broke up and sunk out in the middle of the lagoon, why don't we find spars and wreckage along the beach?" He shrugged his shoulders and listened to the

conversation aft before he went on: "Know what he thinks? Maybe she drifted straight for the reef between them two islands and went clean over on a big sea!"

We were not far from the *motu* now, the islet in the north end of the lagoon. I indicated our course with a wave of my hand and raised Altmann's glasses for a look at the dot of land I remembered so well. It lay in the path of the hurricane, and the old palms, whose fronds rustling in the trade wind high overhead had made it a place of shade and beauty in days gone by, were all gone now. No trace remained of the houses we had built for my uncle's pearl-divers, nor of the warehouse where he had stored his shell. Only a mound of great coral boulders, piled up fantastically by the sea and surrounded by a beach of snowy sand. Then I saw something which made me re-focus the glasses and stare for half a minute before I spoke to the interpreter.

"Tell Lieutenant Altmann," I said, "to have a look just south of the little island yonder; I think I see the masts of a ship."

A glance at the spot I pointed out caused the German officer to order our course changed; half an hour later we passed the islet and came to a stop, with engine idling, beside a sunken ship. She was the Sumbawa, gone down in eight or nine fathoms of water, which left her stumpy masts projecting above the surface of the lagoon. She must have struck on a jagged shoal a few hundred yards to the south, torn a great hole in her plates, and gone down almost

at once. The interpreter, who stood close behind me, was speaking again.

"Some of the boys," he remarked, "think Staub was aboard of her when she began to drag — you know, that thickset fellow, the bosun. The skipper sent him out in the afternoon to see if he could find anything we could use, and somebody said they saw him go out again in the dinghy. Then she came ashore, but he could n't have got off in that sea. Well, there or on shore, it's all the same, he's gone — and a good riddance, the bloody slave-driver! Supposing he was on the old hulk and managed to climb up in the rigging when she struck; he'd be there now, huh? But he ain't."

Altmann glanced at me with a shrug of his shoulders and a shake of his head. He pointed to the land north of us, Koro, the sharply curving island which shuts in the northwest side of the lagoon.

For another two hours we skirted the inner beaches of Koro and Tamanu, but we sighted no wreckage and saw no signs of human beings, dead or alive. When we drew near the German camp, toward five o'clock, I was convinced that, save the Tara's people and the Germans who had weathered the storm in the two boats, no living man remained on Iriatai. The sun was low when I stepped ashore, and the hushed calm, broken only by the muffled booming of the breakers on the outer reef, was in strange contrast with the tangle of wreckage on land.

The Germans had been at work during our absence. The other boat was deeply laden with coconuts and

drums of oil, and her mast was stepped and stayed in place. Altmann took my hand, smiled not very cheerfully, and spoke in his own language.

"The lieutenant wants to thank you," explained the interpreter. "He says he's sorry he can't leave you fellows some grub; we're too short even to give you another can of beef. We're going to pull out now; he says, Good luck to you."

I shook the officer's hand warmly and sat down on a block of coral to watch them get under way, trying to imagine myself in Altmann's place. He had no reason for staying longer on Iriatai, now that there was no further hope of finding his comrades alive. No living man on that narrow ring of land could have missed seeing our boat and signaling us. The Germans had lost all their provisions except the few tins of beef and the pilot bread in the lockers of their boats; every day of delay would reduce their little store by a certain amount, and even with the coconuts they had gathered, they would only have enough for a week or ten days at sea, on the scantiest of rations. What would Altmann do? Put to sea, I thought, and head for the nearest region where vessels might be expected to pass. The boats were well armed with machine guns and rifles; no doubt he would attempt to capture the first vessel he met and make his way back through the blockade to Germany or to a neutral port.

While I sat wondering what was to become of them, the Germans were better occupied. One boat was loaded and ready to go; they set about loading the

other with the method and industry of beavers, some rigging the mast and sail, others rolling the drums of oil through the shallows, still others passing the green coconuts from hand to hand. In ten minutes they were ready to go. The men clambered aboard, at a word from Altmann the two engines started simultaneously, and a moment later the Seefalke's boats swung out from shore and headed for the pass. The officer standing in the stern of the leading boat waved a lean arm in a friendly gesture of farewell.

Presently one boat and then the other disappeared around the point. I rose from my hard seat, stretching my arms with a feeling akin to relief, not sorry to see the last of the Germans. Though our situation was by no means a cheerful one and might have even a serious side, we had the island to ourselves, at least, and the Sumbawa was safe in the lagoon. Our task was clean-cut: first, to provide ourselves with food, and second, to knock together some kind of craft in which to sail away and notify the nearest British authorities.

As I trudged up the beach to where the Tara's men awaited me, I was forced to admit, somewhat ruefully, that we were in a fix. We had n't an ounce of provisions of any kind; we had no matches to make fire, for those von Arnst had sent us had been swept away by the sea, and the two or three boxes of safety matches in the men's pockets had been ruined by the rain; we had no fishing-tackle, and our only tools were the axe Fatu had taken care to preserve and the clasp knives all sailors carry. A party of white

men, I thought, would have had a thin time in our situation; it was lucky for me that my companions were Kanakas. They would be able to make fire, for one thing, with which to cook the fish that would be our staple food. The native method of fire making is simple, and I understand it thoroughly, but it needs a skill and a perfection of muscular control I have never been able to acquire. (In romances of castaways on desert islands there is always some handy man who produces fire with the crystal of his watch — an excellent idea if one carries a watch, which I have never done.) And the Kanakas would be able to make fishhooks of wood or shell and lines of coconut fibre, so we would be sure of an abundance of fish. There was plenty of fresh water on Iriatai, and I had noticed that the south end of Koro was almost undamaged by the hurricane. The ground was littered with nuts blown down by the wind and there were still a good many hanging on the palms. The best plan would be to move to Koro at once.

I found the men waiting for me with some impatience; they had kept their promise, though they had seen the boats set out and had feared, until they saw me, that the Germans might have spirited me away. Their eyes lit up at sight of the can of beef in my hand. It was a two-pound tin, and when Fatu had opened it with his clasp knife, he divided it in nine equal portions, each on a leaf. Three or four ounces of bully beef and the pulp of unlimited young coconuts, washed down with drafts of their sweet juice, made a meal that left me in a more cheerful

mood. We had no fire, for so far there was no wood dry enough to make fire in native style, and when the meal was over the smokers fingered pipes and tobacco longingly. It was then that I told them what I had in mind.

"The Germans are gone for good," I said, as we lounged in a little circle in the dusk; "they are gone, and all those who were on the ship are drowned, I fear. So we have Iriatai to ourselves. I have been around the lagoon to-day; the storm did little damage on the south end of Koro, and I think in the morning we had better establish ourselves there, where there are still plenty of coconuts. There is a well with plenty of sweet water for drinking, and with your knives and Fatu's axe we can build a house in a day. Let the four men who understand that work best build the house while the rest of us search for food. Can you make fire to-morrow?"

Fatu smiled and pointed to half a dozen sticks of pithy tree-hibiscus wood which he had been drying in the sun. "By midday to-morrow we shall have fire," he said.

"This is the plan I have made," I went on; "if any of you has a better, let him speak when I have explained my idea. We must have a house to shelter us, and we must have fish, for a man cannot live on coconuts alone. The poor hooks and the weak line that caught our fish yesterday are not enough; those who know how must make lines of fibre and hooks for the different kinds of fish. Then, when we have a house and a supply of food, we can begin to think

about the future. One thing is sure: we might wait here a year or more without sighting a sail. There is little trade since the war and the Tara was the only schooner that visited Seroni's island. So let us consider how we are to go about the building of a big sailing-canoe. It must be big enough to hold us in comfort, with a sufficiency of food and water. Tahiti lies to leeward, by good fortune; we can choose our weather and run down before the wind. What if it takes a year to build our canoe? It is better to be busy than idle, and who knows when a schooner will pass this way? We have only an axe and our knives, but I forgot to tell you that the derelict ship is sunk in shallow water by the islet; perhaps we can float out to her on a raft and dive down to see what is to be found. There will be tools, and we can surely get bits of iron. What do you say?"

The Tara's men grunted, nodding their approval, and Fatu spoke for them. He patted the axe at his side.

"With this," he said, "and no other tools but our knives, we can build a seaworthy canoe. We are nine, and even Lem can help with the plaiting of the mats we shall use for sails. And do not think that it will take a year, or even the half of a year. In three months, perhaps, we shall set sail, unless the sea has carried away all the good trees. You are right, Tehare; we must think first of a house to keep out the rain, and food to eat; once we have those things we shall start our shipbuilding. If a schooner passes meanwhile, so much the better, but I fear that none will pass."

The next morning dawned beautifully clear and calm. We were up at dawn, and having neither breakfast to eat nor luggage to pack up, we wasted no time in setting out on our long tramp up the beach. Fatu carried his axe, and the cabin boy shouldered the bundle of sticks which were to kindle our midday fire. As we drew near the north end of Tamanu, five miles from where we had slept, we passed out of the region of desolation into groves of palms which furnished a pleasant shade. The underbrush was gone and the palm tops were tattered by the hurricane, but clusters of nuts still hung here and there, and they lay about in hundreds among the débris and driftwood underfoot. Marama, on the lookout for shellfish along the beach of the lagoon, had lingered in the rear, and a shout from him made us halt. He had found an old canoe three quarters buried in the sand.

"A canoe!" he called; "Perhaps it is not broken. Come — help me dig it out!"

We hastened back. Ivi and Ofai began to dig in the sand with the energy of dogs after a gopher. Fatu's eyes sparkled as he leaned over to examine Marama's find; old Pahuri gazed down keenly with a nod of recognition.

"I know that canoe," he said; "it was built here on the island two years ago. The people in the village used it for fishing; it must have been hidden there under the trees and carried here by the storm. The wood is *ati*, hardest and most enduring of all."

By this time all hands were digging with a will,

and before long the canoe emerged from the sand, was emptied, washed, and set afloat. The outrigger and the *iato* poles were missing, but a single passenger, with great care, could keep it on an even keel. The hull was uninjured and did not leak.

"We are lucky indeed," remarked Fatu with a broad smile; "with this canoe we shall be able to fish outside the reef, where fish are big and plentiful. Eh, Marama, get yourself a stick and pole your canoe along as we walk. To-night or to-morrow morning I will cut an outrigger."

The finding of the canoe put us in a cheerful mood, and Marama's antics as he poled the cranky hull made the Kanakas laugh and shout like schoolboys. "Take care!" cried Ivi, "you're going to capsize!" All eyes were now on the canoe, and when Lem, like all Chinamen a great hand at banter, added to the chorus a high-pitched warning in Chinese, Marama lost his balance and the canoe whirled bottom-up like a flash, depositing its pilot in three feet of warm salt water.

Fatu, whose dignity as a skipper forbade his joining the sport, had gone on ahead. He reached the northern tip of Tamanu and began to wade across the two hundred yards of reef that separate that island from Koro, its neighbor on the north. The tide was low and the sea washed across the reef no more than knee-deep. I saw the Tara's captain lean over as though he had seen something in the water, straighten his body, and wade back hastily to deposit his axe on shore.

"*Aita e huru te maa!*" he called excitedly. "Here's any amount of food! Let us stop here and make a meal before we go on."

Marama beached his canoe at the words and all hands followed the skipper into the shallow water, the wash of a gentle surf. The denizens of the reef, forced to take refuge in their coral crannies during the storm, had come out in force to feed; the reef was crawling with a variety of delicious shellfish and crustaceans. Crayfish a foot long, looking like lobsters minus their claws, darted this way and that; blunt-spined sea urchins, most delicate of all sea food, were thick underfoot; there were *maoa* by hundreds — a creature which lives in a shell like a large snail's, and eaten raw in native fashion, is as good as an oyster.

We began on maoa, collecting them till our shirt-fronts bulged and depositing them in heaps on the beach. When each man thought that he had enough, he selected a pair of heavy stones and began to crack the shells, swallowing the reluctant inhabitants with a sup of salt water. This was real food, rich, nourishing, and more than welcome after our thin diet of coconuts.

"Come," I said, when I heard the first sighs of content from the feasters, "let's get as many crayfish as we can and have another feast when our wood is dry enough to make fire."

It needs the quick eye and the toughened foot of the Kanaka to catch the crayfish of the South Seas. It darts about the shallow tidal pools with surprising speed, stopping to regard its pursuer warily,

with beady eyes set on the ends of stalks. It can be speared if one has a spear, but to catch it by hand is an impossible task. The native approaches his crayfish from behind and claps down his foot on the spiny back so suddenly that the creature is caught before it can make another of its astounding darts. The Tara's sailors were masters of this art, and we soon had two great bunches of crayfish, tied with short lengths of bark.

Fatu took up his axe and led the way across to the island where we planned to make our camp. Here on the southern end of Koro the sea had done almost no damage; there were more coconuts than we could ever use, and the forest trees my uncle had left standing when he cleared the aboriginal bush of Iriatai were quite unhurt. Close to a shallow well which had once furnished drinking-water for the laborers, we found a magnificent ati tree, straight, six feet in diameter, and rising more than thirty feet without a branch. Fatu examined it critically and turned to us.

"This is the tree to make the keel of our canoe," he remarked, patting the rough bark approvingly. "I think we had better build our house here."

"It is almost noon," I said, thinking how good a broiled crayfish would taste; "do you think the wood is dry enough to kindle fire now?"

Fatu took up one of the hibiscus sticks which had been laid in the sun while we stopped by the reef. He nodded and grinned as he glanced around at the faces of his men.

"It is long since I made fire in Maori fashion — twenty years perhaps. Who among you is surest to succeed?" Marama shrugged his shoulders and for a moment no one volunteered. The traders have introduced matches everywhere and the old Polynesian art of fire-making is dying fast. Pahuri, the wizened Rarotongan who had been the Tara's engineer, grunted contemptuously.

"These young men know nothing," he said; "they learn nothing from the white men, and they have forgotten all their ancestors knew! Give me the driest of the wood, and watch. I will show you how our forefathers kindled fire a thousand years before the white men came into these seas."

He chose a stick five feet long, perhaps two inches in diameter, and now as dry as bone. Whetting his clasp knife on a bit of coral, he took up a shorter and thinner stick and whittled one end of it to a bluntish chisel-point. Then he seated himself on a stump, astride of the longer bit of wood, letting the far end rest on the ground. He beckoned to Marama.

"Hold the lower end firmly," he ordered; "and you others cut some dry shavings for the first kindling of our fire." I was watching old Pahuri closely. I have seen the trick done many times, but it always fascinates me, looking so easy and being in reality so hard.

Grasping the short stick in both hands, with the point down, he began to move it back and forth on the surface of the other stick so that it ploughed a little furrow as it went. His arms moved slowly at

first, but faster as the seconds passed, and the length of each stroke was the same to the eighth of an inch. As the furrowed stick lay at a considerable angle, the fine dust gathered at the lower end. Ten seconds passed -- twenty — thirty seconds; Pahuri was working like a madman now, with efforts which seemed to strain every fibre of his wizened little body. The furrow was smoking; suddenly the mass of dust at the lower end began to glow. The old man tossed the short stick aside and leaned over, blowing as strongly as he could, for his breath was almost gone. "Quick!" he panted; "the kindling!"

The dust was like a live ember now, and next moment a thin flame rose and crackled among the shavings. Our fire was alight.

It is no wonder that the old races have deified the heroes who brought mankind the gift of fire. In our civilization we take it for granted, its pleasant warmth and its effects on almost every bit of food we eat, but there must have been a time when our ancestors lived without fire, eating raw food and shivering through the winter nights. The name of Prometheus has not been forgotten. Here on the other side of the world a Polynesian hero called Maui brought his people the same great gift. I thought of him that day as we ate our first meal of cooked food, and realized why his name and the stories of his exploits were still on the lips of the older Maoris.

Lying in the shade of the ati tree, I cast away the

empty shell of my third broiled crayfish and patted my stomach as I grinned at Marama. Fatu strolled over to us and squatted on his heels.

"I have cut an outrigger for the canoe," he said; "it is there yonder on the beach. Will you two rig it this afternoon? We need the canoe for fishing, and I want to paddle out to that sunken ship to see if I can find another axe or a bit of iron to make an adze. We others will start our housebuilding, eh?"

"It is the hour for sleep," remarked Marama when the skipper had gone, "my eyes are heavy; but come, Fatu is right." He stood up, his handsome teeth flashing in a smile, and we went to where the canoe was hauled up on the beach twenty yards away. The outrigger lay close by, a straight pole of young *fau*, the tree hibiscus, four inches thick and ten or twelve feet long. It would be light as cork when it was thoroughly dry. We carried the canoe to a hard, level stretch of sand and propped it with stones so that the hull tilted a few degrees to port. By attaching the outrigger in this position, we could ensure that the canoe would support the weight of its passengers on an even keel.

Our first task was to cut the cross poles the natives call iato and make them fast. Whetting our knives to a keen edge, we cut a stiff piece of old fau, as thick as my wrist and about seven feet long, for the forward pole, and a light, flexible rod to hold the outrigger's after end in place. As we peeled the wood, we set the long strips of bark aside, for the bark of the fau is the finest of natural cord.

We had no auger and it was lucky that the holes for the lashings were already bored in the hard gunwales of the canoe. While Marama held the forward pole in place, just crossing the gunwale to starboard and projecting on the port side, where the outrigger — by one of the curiously rigid native conventions — is always made fast, I lashed one side and then the other to the gunwale with our strips of strong green bark. Then we made fast the flexible after pole — flexible in order to give with the motion of the sea and make the canoe less apt to capsize. Next, with a stick picked up on the beach, we measured off an equal distance on each pole — about five feet — and marked the place with a notch. The outrigger must float exactly parallel to the hull if the canoe is to be paddled easily and steered straight.

Now came the hardest part of our task. The after pole, being flexible, is attached direct to the outrigger floating alongside, but the rigid iato forward must be fastened with an ingenious little truss of sticks, their length depending on the freeboard of the hull. These sticks are called *tiatia;* they are of the thickness of a fountain pen and are made of the hardest wood obtainable. We whittled ours out of the branches of an ironwood tree growing near by, — four of them, — sharpening the lower ends and cutting off the upper ends square. Then we laid the outrigger in place on the smooth sand, four feet from the canoe. Marama chose a heavy stone and hammered the sharpened sticks into the outrigger

like so many nails, till their points were well buried in the softer wood, one pair forward of the cross pole, the other pair aft. We cut notches in the squared upper ends, sprung them apart, and lashed them firmly to the iato a foot above. This made a strong little truss, good for a man's weight pressing down from above, and only needing a double strip of bark, tightened by twisting and running vertically from outrigger to cross pole, to ensure it against stresses of any sort. The spring of the little sticks gave the arrangement a certain flexibility, though when finished it was all taut as a banjo string. To notch and lash down the after pole was only three minutes' work.

We picked up our canoe, waded out into the shallows, and set it down, admiring its graceful lines as it floated with a little list to port. Marama slapped me between the shoulder blades and gave a whoop of pleasure. "Now for a paddle," he exclaimed.

It was mid-afternoon when I borrowed Fatu's axe. The Tara's men were seated on the site of our house, their fingers flying as they plaited the leaflets of palm fronds into the coarse mats used for thatching. The skipper had cut the corner posts, plates, rafters, and ridgepole; I found him digging holes with a sharpened stick. He was too busy for speech when I asked for the axe, but he pointed to it with his chin, in the odd fashion Kanakas have.

Marama picked up the axe and we set out to find an hibiscus tree of suitable size. He was a superb axeman, almost equal to the old settlers of America,

who could split a toothpick or fell a great forest tree with the same tool. When he found his tree he motioned me to stand back, spat on his hands, and began to make the chips fly right and left. A notch grew and deepened in the trunk, more than a foot thick; presently Marama went to the other side of the tree to begin his uppercut. A dozen strokes, a creak, a swishing of branches through the air, and the fau tree came down with a thud. I watched with interest, unable to be of much use. The native boy squared off the ragged lower end of the trunk before he started the shaping of his paddle. Then, when he was sure that the wood was sound, he measured off by eye the length of blade and haft, marked the places with a pair of shallow notches, and cut through the tree very quickly and skillfully at the farther notch. The blade was to be at the butt where the wood was thickest, and he left its shaping for the last. The wood was soft, of course, but I marveled at the speed with which it melted away under his axe as he shaped the paddle's haft. I was able to help a little now, holding the butt of the log and turning it at the axeman's command.

Little by little the slender haft took form; Marama's strokes, heavy and slashing at first as he ripped off great chunks of wood, became light, delicate, and glancing blows. Within an hour the haft was roughened out and he began on the blade, a far easier task, with less danger of a false movement spoiling all. I held the future paddle upright while my companion hacked at the two sides of the log's

butt, chopping and splitting till nothing was left but a thin plank, edged with bark on either side. Marama set down his axe, regarded his work critically, and smiled at me.

"Finish it with your knife," he suggested.

When we returned to camp, the framework of the new house was up, lashed together strongly with bark, and the Kanakas were beginning to bind on the little thatching mats, laying them like shingles, beginning at the eaves. Lem and the cabin boy were stripping off green leaflets and piling them in a thick mass across one end of the house, to make a soft communal bed for the lot of us. A fire was crackling near by, and we still had an ample store of shellfish which would be roasted when the flames died down to glowing coals.

I sat with my back to a young palm, whittling at the new paddle till it pleased my hand and eye, then rubbing it smooth with a lump of porous coral. The sun set; the short twilight of the tropics faded to dusk; a vagrant slant of air brought to my nostrils a pleasant odor of roasting food. My task was finished before it grew too dark to work, and as I rose, thinking of supper hungrily, I saw Fatu towering above me, hands on his hips. He took the paddle and handled it with appreciation.

"Ah, it is finished," he said; "you two have worked well this afternoon. I have decided to send Ivi and Ofai out to that sunken ship; they are the best divers among us, and if they start early in the morning, they will be back before noon. Who

knows — they may find tools, or iron to make tools, or food in tins. But come; our food is cooked."

After supper we piled driftwood on the fire and lounged contentedly in the firelight. The smoke rose vertically in the still air, and the flames, now leaping high, now dying to a ruddy glow, sent the shadows retreating and advancing among the palm boles. The men had gotten out their pipes and filled them with the little stores of tobacco they had dried in the sun. I was not a smoker, and I envied them as they lay relaxed in the sand, puffing with an air of profound content. This evening, for some reason or other, our situation seemed rather pleasant than otherwise; give a man food, shelter, and work that interests him, and I fancy he needs little more to make him happy.

I was beginning to nod with drowsiness. The soft murmur of the breakers on the outer reef was like a lullaby, and there was no other sound save the crackling of the fire and the subdued voices of my companions, speaking their musical tongue. Only a few times in my life have I had the same supreme sense of peace, and each time, oddly enough, it has been the forerunner of turmoil and disaster of some kind. If I had known what was to happen before another day had passed, my drowsiness would have been dispelled, but the law which hides the future from us is a kindly law, after all. Unable to resist sleep longer, I bade the others good night, crossed the circle of firelight, and stretched out on our soft bed of leaves.

X

THE KILLER

None of us, I think, ever slept better than on that night. The rising sun found us laid out like sardines in a row, each man in the position he had assumed the night before. Marama's voice awakened me; he was stripping off his dungarees for a plunge into the lagoon. I sat up, rubbing my eyes, and followed him a moment later into the clear salt water where we dived and frolicked like a pair of seals. Even to-day I can feel the joy of those morning swims on Iriatai, the water, deep blue and as clear as air where the white sand shelved off steeply into the lagoon, warm enough to enter without shock and cool enough to be pleasant to the skin.

Ivi and Ofai were pushing off in the canoe when we came ashore, still munching their breakfast of cold left-overs from the night before. They were old friends of mine, my uncle's two good-natured brown sailors, and they grinned at me as I stood dripping in the shallows. I grinned back, never dreaming that I was not to see either man again, alive or dead.

We were busy that morning, for Fatu urged us on tirelessly. He was all anxiety to begin his ship-building, and impatient to have done with the house. But this was the rainy season and he knew that the first consideration was shelter and a comfortable sleeping-place for his men. Lem and the cabin boy

and the new sailor, Amaru, were plaiting a great mat of palm leaves which was to cover the entire floor of the house. Marama and I passed up the little thatching-mats and held them in place while Fatu and the old engineer, standing on stages inside, made them fast to each rafter in turn. At times we had to stop our work and go off to fetch bundles of freshly peeled bark, for the thatching required hundreds of yards of cord. At last the house was finished, and the ridge, a double line of matting plaited with extra care, was bent over the ridgepole and skewered down in place. Then we began on the little kitchen, a few paces from the house, indispensable if our fire was to burn during the tropical rains.

Toward noon Fatu began to look up frequently from his work, hoping for a glimpse of the returning canoe.

"They are long in coming back," he remarked; "perhaps they have found many things we need. But they should be returning now."

The islet, shorn of its tall trees, was just visible far out on the lagoon, and though the day was calm, the distance was too great to see the canoe or the tips of the Sumbawa's masts. When we knocked off for a light lunch of coconuts, the sun was directly overhead, and all hands were wondering — quite without anxiety — what Ivi and Ofai could have found to keep them so long. I yawned as I came strolling back from the beach, and Fatu caught my eye. "Why not sleep for a little while?" he suggested, smiling; "the work is nearly finished. Amaru will

thatch the rest of the cook-house. I am going to the outer reef with Marama and Pahuri to see if we can catch some fish for to-night." He patted the great muscular expanse of his stomach and made a wry face. "Coconuts will keep the life in a man, but that is not enough!"

I was shamefully sleepy and the suggestion was a welcome one. Stifling a second desperate yawn, I made for the cool green twilight in our house.

I have no idea how long I slept — an hour or two, perhaps. But I dreamed a long-drawn-out dream so vivid that I can recall it even now. Dreams, I have often noticed, are of two kinds: the commoner sort, in which one is like a spectator at a show, aware all the time that one's fantastic adventures are only make-believe, and a much rarer kind marked by the stamp and conviction of reality. My dream that afternoon on Iriatai was of the latter sort.

It began with a winter evening at home on the ranch, a Friday evening, for old Judge Gilmour, my father's friend, had come out to spend the night and have a morning's shooting with me on the marsh. I had finished the last of my Monday's lessons, some knotty problem in plane geometry, and now we were gathered about the fire in the living-room. My mother sat in her favorite chair, knitting a sweater, smiling at us from time to time though she spoke little, as was her way. Once or twice she halted in her knitting to stroke her deaf old Persian cat, purring beside her on the rug. The Judge had taken his new gun, a twenty-gauge, out of its case, and was

showing us some shells he had ordered from San Francisco. He set down an opened box of cartridges, put his gun together with a snap, and handed it to me. "Feel the balance, Charlie," he said. "It'll bring 'em down if you point it the right way!" My father reached out for the gun, though he had never been a keen sportsman. "Breakfast at half-past five," he told us. "That'll give you time to dress and make a decent meal, and get into your blinds before the legal hour. Want the alarm clock?" "No, sir," I answered; "I can wake up any time I like when I'm going shooting." But when I was in bed and the lamp blown out, I began to wonder if I could make good my boast. There had been a heavy frost in the north, and the marsh had been alive with birds the afternoon before. The Judge would never forgive me if I overslept and we missed the cream of the shooting. I tossed sleeplessly, dozed off, and awoke with a start to scratch a match. It was still dark, but my watch said five o'clock. When we had breakfasted, we shouldered our guns and trudged down to the marsh behind the dunes. There was a hint of gray light in the east as we waded through the withered sedge and squatted in our blinds, a hundred yards apart. The air was musical with the whimper of invisible wings, and as I settled down on the old box that served me as a seat, a great pack of widgeon swept out to sea with a chorus of plaintive whistles and the sound of a hundred fathoms of sailcloth being ripped apart. The sky line of the eastern hills took form against the light of dawn; I could see the

birds now, passing like swift gray wraiths, but my father was a law-abiding man, and we never fired the first shot till they struck the old-fashioned triangle at the house to tell us that it lacked thirty minutes of sunrise. Then: *Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang* — the sound came faint and clear in the still air. I slipped a pair of shells into my gun and peeped over the top of the blind. A dozen canvasback were coasting down from a great height on rigid wings. They passed me, well out of range, turned with humming flight-feathers, and slanted down swiftly overhead. My finger itched on the trigger, but they were still a little high and they were heading straight for the Judge's decoys; it would be better to let our guest have the first shot of the day. I waited anxiously for what seemed an interminable time. Had n't he seen them? Would he never shoot?

Crack! Bang! Crack!

My dream was over. I sat up abruptly on my bed of leaves, as thoroughly bewildered as I have ever been in my life. I was in a thatched hut on an island four thousand miles from California, but the noise of three sharp reports still rang in my ears.

Thirty seconds must have passed before I stepped to the doorway of the house. It gave on the lagoon, and as I glanced out, I saw what dispelled the sleep from my bewildered eyes. The canoe that Marama and I had rigged the day before was beached in the shallows twenty yards away, and a short, sinister figure, with huge shoulders, a bull-neck, and arms that hung almost to the knees, stood on the beach,

chin thrust forward and small evil eyes peering this way and that. It was Hochbootsmann Staub, and a long-barreled pistol smoked in his hand. Close to where I stood, by the green mat he and Amaru had been plaiting, our little brown cabin boy lay sprawled, face in the sand and one leg twitching spasmodically; and five yards off I saw the sailor Amaru rolling in agony, with the scarlet froth of a chest wound on his lips. Both were dying. Staub turned his head at that moment and spied me gaping from the door. The pistol flew up, but I gathered my wits in the nick of time. A fourth report rang out as I bounded out of sight around the house and made for the shelter of the bush, running as I had never run before. I nearly covered the distance in the breath of time before the murderer sighted me next; but as I leaped into a thicket of hibiscus, something flicked my shirt with the snap of a whiplash and I heard the pistol crack for the fifth time. Staub handled his weapon with uncanny skill.

Instinctively I headed south where I knew the others were at their fishing, forcing my way through thickets and bounding across the openings like a hunted animal. My breath came in short gasps and I seemed to hear the pounding of Staub's feet and the crash of his passage through the underbrush close behind. Then, with a start of alarm, I halted suddenly at sight of a man crouching near the lagoon. But he had not seen me, for he was gazing intently in another direction. Next moment I perceived with relief that it was Lem. I whistled softly to attract

his attention; he gave a start and turned his head sharply, displaying a very solemn yellow face. His smile of relief and recognition was ghastly, but he managed to beckon with a shaking hand.

"All light, John — he go canoe!"

Crouching behind the Chinaman in a thicket only a few yards from the shore of the lagoon, I saw that an opening in the bush commanded a view back toward our camp, across a little bay. Staub had taken to the canoe which drifted a short distance from the beach, while he sat hunched and motionless, gazing at the land. He was at least three hundred yards from us and it was inconceivable that his eyes could make us out, but once, when he turned his face full in our direction, I felt myself shrink and saw Lem crouch lower still. The Chinaman was whispering rapidly in his broken English, as though the murderous bosun might have overheard.

"You 'sleep — me, Amalu, boy makee mat — Amalu see canoe come. Plitty soon come close — no see Ivi — no see Ofai — see Pulutia man, plenty no good! Me tink no good — allee same dead — ghost p'laps! Lem no stop, lun hidee bush — watchee, watchee! Amalu, boy, stand up — Amalu say: 'You no see Ivi? You no see Ofai?' Pulutia man no makee talk — lookee house, lookee bush, no see Lem! Plenty no good, that man! Pull out littlee gun, shoot Amalu — Amalu fall down. Shoot boy one time — boy lun — shoot two time — boy fall down. Lem plenty flaid, lun, lun — hidee this side — watchee, watchee!"

Staub was going ashore again; he may have been afraid that someone he had not seen was hiding in the bush and would cut him off from the canoe. But his inspection must have been reassuring, for now he beached his canoe and walked confidently across the clearing to the well. We saw him stoop and drink for a long time; then he rummaged about the camp, explored the house, and ended by making several trips back and forth to the canoe. I learned afterward that he was helping himself from our heap of green coconuts. Finally he pushed the canoe into deeper water and paddled away in the direction of the distant islet. We watched him go with a profound relief. I touched the Chinaman's shoulder.

"You stay here and watch," I ordered him. "I must go and warn the others. If the canoe comes back before I return, come running as fast as you can to let me know. I think they are fishing on the reef between the two islands."

Lem nodded, and I set off south at a trot.

I met the fishermen before I had traveled half a mile. Fatu was in the lead and all three men were laden with fish. Too far off to hear the pistol shots, they had no inkling of tragedy, but my face must have mirrored the distress and hot mounting rage I felt, for Fatu halted at sight of me.

"What is it, Tehare?" he asked anxiously. "What has happened?"

"Amaru is dead," I blurted out, stammering with emotion; "and the little cabin boy — slaughtered like a pair of sheep! Do you remember the bosun of

the German ship, the short thick man who was the first aboard the Tara? He shot them, and would have killed me too if I had not been in the house when he came."

"Aué!" It was Marama who exclaimed as he leaned over to examine my side. "You are wounded; there is blood on your shirt!" It was not until that moment that I realized how narrow my escape had been; Staub's last shot, passing between my arm and my ribs, had slitted my shirt and creased the skin an eighth of an inch deep. Fatu motioned Marama aside and examined the scratch hastily.

"It is nothing," he said, "but tell me — the German, whence did he come, and how did he get to our camp?"

I shook my head. "All I know is this: he came alone in our canoe, and began to kill the moment he set foot on land. Where are Ivi and Ofai? Dead, I fear. But come, we must hasten back to Lem, who is on the watch. The Purutia paddled away across the lagoon when he had done his killing."

"There are things I cannot understand," I went on, as we made our way toward camp, "but one of the Germans told me that they thought the bosun may have been on the derelict ship when she sank. The north wind drove her ashore first, and when the hurricane swung round to the south, the sea lifted her and she drifted away. If a man had been on board, he would have had no chance to get ashore." Old Pahuri interrupted me; he had a quick intelligence: —

"Ah, they thought he might have been on the ship? You said her masts were above water; perhaps he took refuge in the rigging when the ship sank, and swam to the islet later, when the lagoon had calmed. And there are holes among the rocks there where a man might hide. Perhaps Ivi and Ofai went ashore for a look at the place where the divers' houses once stood, and the Purutia took them by surprise. But why should he want to kill?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "I do not know, unless thirst and suffering have driven him mad. But he is dangerous as a hungry shark."

Presently we came abreast of the Chinaman's hiding-place, and he hailed us. "All light," he announced, as he crawled out of the thicket, "he go littlee island — p'laps no come back."

Our camp, three hundred yards from where Lem had kept his watch, was in a sorry state. The bodies of Amaru and the jolly brown youngster who had been the Tara's cabin boy lay sprawled and lifeless on the sand, stained with their blood. We stood in a little silent group, only five of us now, gazing down on the poor clay from which our comrades' souls had fled. Fatu's jaw was set and I saw his great hands clench; from the depths of his chest came a rumble like a mastiff's growl. If Staub had appeared at that moment, we would have rushed him, for all his pistol and his deadly aim. No doubt he would have bowled over the lot of us before the foremost could lay hands on him, but our mood was too ugly to count the handicap.

The sun was setting when we finished our sad task of burial and brushed the fresh earth from our hands. We had taken turns at keeping watch on the beach, for we believed that we had to deal with a madman whose mania was homicide, and there is no guessing what the insane will do. But the quick dusk of the tropics was setting in now and our eyes could no longer give us warning of Staub's approach. Fatu picked up the fire sticks.

"It is my turn to make fire," he said, with an attempt at a smile. "We have plenty of fish, and no matter what happens, man must eat." But Pahuri shook his head.

"No — no fire to-night," he said dryly. "We must eat our fish raw, and we must not eat it here. When we have thought of a way to kill that man and he is safely dead, we can speak of fire once more. Waste no time! Let every man drink his fill from the well and take what he needs; it is madness to linger here after nightfall."

Fatu struck his forehead with the palm of one great hand. "I am without sense!" he exclaimed. "You are right, old friend. We must find a hiding-place in the thick bush far from here, and spend the night without loud talk and without fire. Come!"

Carrying our strings of fish and a few young coconuts, we set off in single file, Fatu in the lead. It was still twilight, and before dark we had found a little opening in the midst of an hibiscus thicket, where we could lie hidden on a bed of clean white sand and see the stars beginning to twinkle overhead.

Marama set off for the lagoon, to fetch salt water in half coconut shells that served as cups. Fatu dealt out the fish, to each man his share; knives were opened, the fish cleaned and scaled, and presently we began our silent little meal. When Marama set down carefully beside me the shell of sea water which replaces the saltcellar in Polynesian households, I did my best to eat, cutting off bits of fish, dipping them in the water, and swallowing them like so many oysters. Raw fish, pickled in lime juice and served with a piquant sauce, is excellent, as I know from experience; but this was the first time I had tasted the primitive sort, and all I can say for it is that it is not quite so bad as it sounds. Depression and anxiety had spoiled my appetite in any case. I set down the food scarcely tasted, lay back, propping my head on my hand, and listened to the whispering talk of the others, exchanging plans and ideas as they ate. Their voices would have been inaudible ten yards away.

"You are wise, Pahuri," Fatu was saying. "What do you think?"

"He is mad," replied the engineer, "and he will come back. I have seen men before taken with the killing-madness. It was in the old days when I was with the whalers, touching sometimes at Sumatra and the islands roundabout. The people of those islands are brown like us, but smaller; they have a name for this madness, which is common there — they call it *amok*. He will return."

"Do you think Ivi and Ofai are dead?"

"I am sure of it. He has the canoe, and men amok spare no one, not even their children or their wives."

"We must kill him, then."

"There is no other way."

"How is it to be done? He is fierce and cunning, and Tehare says there is death in his little gun. And he must kill no more of us!"

Pahuri hesitated before he spoke. His head was bent as he squatted in the starlight, and he chewed a large morsel of fish reflectively.

"I have made a plan," he whispered at last; "let us talk it over and see what you and the others think. He knows where our house is and knows that he has not killed all of us; sooner or later he is sure to come back. I think he will be afraid to sleep on shore where we might surprise him by night, and if he stops on the little island, he will be always thirsty, for there is no water there. He knows of our well; he drank there, Tehare says, and he will come back if only to get fresh water. Yes, he is sure to return. Beginning with the first gray of dawn to-morrow, the hour when the first flies begin to buzz, we must keep a lookout. The Purutia will be forced to come by water and we can see him a long way off. No — he might land in the path of the hurricane where the bush is down, but I think he is too cunning to risk our leaping out on him in the thick bush. We shall have time to do a little fishing and to get what coconuts we need, but we must always be prepared to take shelter if he comes.

"My plan is this: let us prepare a little staging

high up among the rafters of the house, just over the door. It must be strong enough to bear the weight of two men, and comfortable enough for a man to sit on for a long time. You, with your axe, will sit on one side, and another man with a great stone on his knees will keep you company. I think I will be that other man; my legs are over-stiff for running — and Amaru was brought up in my sister's house. Yes, I shall keep you company. When we see him coming, you and I can climb to our staging while he is still a long way off, and as he lands, the others can show themselves a little, forty or fifty fathoms away. At that distance there is small danger from a pistol. He will think he has driven us off; then he will drink at the well, gather a few coconuts, and perhaps step into the house as he did to-day. That will be the time for your axe and my heavy stone to do their work."

Fatu and the others had been listening attentively, and I heard whispered exclamations as he ceased to speak.

"Makee axe sharp!" hissed Lem, with Oriental ferocity. "Ah — me likee see! Chopee, chopee head! Too much no good, that man!" In his undemonstrative way, I think the Chinaman had been fond of our little cabin boy. I had often seen him set aside a plate of odds and ends from the Tara's galley, and summon the lad to a between-meals snack.

Marama was all keenness over Pahuri's idea. "Eh, Tehare," he whispered to me, "you and I will lead him on, and make him think that everyone has

run away from our camp. We shall be like the live bait thrown overboard to attract the albicore, which lures him on to seize the baited hook."

Knowing the fate of those unfortunate little fish, I did not like the full implications of Marama's simile!

Fatu was addressing Pahuri in a rumbling whisper:—

"I am sleepy," he said; "do you stay on watch till midnight then, and wake me when it is my turn." He stretched his great bulk on the sand, and a moment later I saw in the faint starlight that he was asleep.

By no means the least attractive quality of the natives is a certain childlike impulsiveness and simplicity, and they are like children again in their ability to go sound asleep at any moment of the day or night. The woman who has set her house in order and has an hour to spare before she starts her midday fire, stretches out for a nap. When the fishermen return from the reef at one o'clock in the morning, they waken all hands for a meal, eat, gossip, smoke for an hour or two, and then fall asleep like so many babies. Perhaps this is because they seldom reflect and never worry; the mere idea of worry, crossing bridges before one comes to them, is almost inconceivable to a Kanaka and would be difficult to express in his language. I have often envied them their happy ability to sleep anywhere or at any time — and never more than on that night.

Marama yawned once, bedded himself down on the

sand, and was asleep almost instantly; but Lem and I, scions of two races old in civilization, found sleep impossible. The Chinaman moved uneasily on the hard sand, muttering from time to time under his breath in his own tongue. As for me, my thoughts were too busy and too painful for drowsiness.

I had seen violent death before, but it had come when my blood was hot for fighting, and it had shocked me far less profoundly than the cold-blooded murder I had seen to-day. I had been brought up to believe that men were by nature kindly, killing one another only in war or in self-protection. But now I realized with a kind of unwilling horror that self-protection implied an aggressor, and that there were in the world evil men to whom the command "Thou shalt not kill" meant nothing. I had known it before, of course, but only academically; even on that night I comforted myself with the thought that Staub was insane.

But I know now, long after the nightmare of those days on the island, that Hochbootsmann Staub was very far from insane — cunning and deadly as a beast of prey. Marooned on the islet by a fantastic trick of fate, he had set his bullet head to work and planned for the future, a future in which he was to be the only living man on Iriatai.

XI

THE END OF HOCHBOOTSMANN STAUB

Even in these modern days there are few clocks in Polynesia and few natives who can tell time. But they have a system of their own, immemorially old, which enables them to keep appointments, or to join a fishing-party, with a fair degree of punctuality. They say, "I will meet you at the last crowing of the cocks before dawn"; or "at the hour when the fowls flutter down from the trees"; or "when the first flies begin to buzz." And if you chance to notice these homely indications of the hour, you will find that they recur with remarkably little variation from day to day.

I have never longed for daylight more than on that night; my bones ached with the hardness of the packed sand, and the hours dragged interminably. When I judged from the waning moon that it was about midnight, I heard a wild rooster somewhere on the southern tip of Koro give a faint, shrill, long-drawn-out crow. It was the first I had seen or heard of the wild chickens once plentiful on Iriatai; most of them must have been lost in the hurricane. Toward four o'clock the same bird crowed again, and I gave up the attempt to sleep. *Cock-a-doodle-doo!* The sound was repeated, far-off and musical, a call known the world over, and which each race of mankind interprets differently. In the

South Seas it is *Petero-é-o!* It struck me that morning that this rendering was closer than ours. I stood up, stretching muscles that ached and blinking eyes that stung from lack of sleep. Fatu sat motionless on watch; the others were sleeping peacefully. I touched the skipper's shoulder.

"I am going to the lagoon to bathe," I whispered. He turned his head.

"Do not be long; in half an hour it will be time to go."

I stole off toward the lagoon beach, my bare feet noiseless on the sand, taking care not to rustle the underbrush in my passage. I knew this stretch of beach, for Marama and I had often stopped here for a swim in the old days. There was a sand bottom to where the coral began, a hundred yards out, and the water was about a fathom deep. I stripped off shirt and dungarees, laid them at the base of a young coconut palm, and slipped into the inky water without a sound. Diving so quietly that I scarcely rippled the surface of the lagoon, I swam along the bottom for fifteen or twenty yards, came up, expelling my breath gently, and made my way back to the beach. The swim refreshed me wonderfully; the night was so warm that I hated to put on my clothes. As I drew near our sleeping-place, I imitated the squeak of a rat, a common night sound on Iriatai, the signal we had agreed on the night before. In that uncertain moonlight and with our enemy at large, I would not have cared to approach Fatu unannounced.

The sleepers were sitting up when I returned, rubbing their eyes and yawning. Out to the east, far away across the lagoon and over the sea beyond, the sky was paling with the approach of a new day. It was time we were astir.

We walked in single file, noiseless as shadows, and when we reached the house there was enough light to distinguish objects some distance away. Fatu motioned us to stop in the bush on the edge of the clearing and he went on alone, quiet and alert as a stalker of big game. Presently he came back.

"I think he is not here," he whispered, "but take care! Perhaps he has hidden the canoe and lies waiting in the bush till the light is strong enough for shooting."

The thought was a disquieting one, and some time passed before we felt at ease to begin our work. But an examination of the beach, where no man, single-handed, could have hauled up the canoe without leaving traces in the sand, convinced us that Staub was nowhere about. We stationed the Chinaman on watch and went to work with a will to set our trap.

The door of our house gave on the lagoon, as I have said, and just inside the doorway and overhead we lashed strong light poles of hibiscus wood across from rafter to rafter, under the high-peaked roof. Then in the middle we fastened a cross-piece of the same wood and hung it from the ridgepole with stout strips of bark. When the scaffolding was finished, Fatu climbed up and seated himself, axe in hand. The poles bent under his great weight,

but they would have supported another like him. He brandished his axe. "Now let him come!" he said. "Let him come if he wants his thick skull split like an orange!"

It had been agreed that Fatu and Pahuri were to take their places on the scaffolding whenever the canoe was sighted making for shore. Lem was to escape and hide himself, while Marama and I acted our part as decoys. In case we became scattered for any reason, the rendezvous after nightfall was to be the place where we had slept. But the morning passed without a sight of Staub.

We munched coconuts to allay our hunger, which became intolerable, in my case at least, in the early afternoon. Finally I spoke to Fatu.

"Perhaps he is not coming to-day," I said, "and I, for one, am hollow with lack of food. A man must eat, no matter what happens; if we keep someone always on watch, I see no reason why we cannot make fire here, cook and eat a meal, and go away directly afterward. With dry wood we can make a fire almost without smoke."

The skipper patted his stomach mournfully.

"I am hollow too," he announced; "raw fish is good, but I can never eat enough of it. I think he would have come before now if he were coming to-day. Let us go to the reef between this island and Tamanu; you and Marama can fish with the two hooks while Pahuri and I gather shellfish. The Chinaman can stop here, keeping a sharp lookout. If he sights the canoe, he can run to warn us."

I called up softly to Lem, perched in a high fork of the ati tree, telling him that we were going to the reef for food, that we would return in time to cook our meal before dark, and that he was to slide down and hasten to warn us if he sighted Staub. A moment later we set off for the reef, moving with a cheerful alacrity that proved how hungry we were.

The reef which separates Koro and Tamanu is at least two hundred yards long, and as I thought over our situation, it struck me that if we did our fishing in the middle, and if by any chance Staub took us by surprise, we would be far enough away to be fairly safe from pistol shots, and have time to make for the land north or south. But I suggested to Fatu that, since we could only guess at the German's whereabouts, it might be as well for three of us to fish while one kept watch. As things turned out, I think my suggestion saved one or more lives.

We reached the south end of Koro and waded through the wash of the sea, little more than a foot deep that day. Marama and I baited our home-made hooks and cast into the deep crannies on the outer rim of the reef; Fatu, axe in hand, searched for shellfish in the pools; old Pahuri, keeping watch, pensive and bare-legged, reminded me of one of the blue herons on the marsh at home. There were half a dozen small fish on the string fast to my belt when I heard him come squattering through the shallows, shouting the alarm.

Crack! A bullet ricocheted from the water between Marama and me and went whining off into

the air. *Bang!* A second shot threw the spray over Fatu's legs as he ran. I was so startled that I dropped my fishing-tackle as I bounded away in Pahuri's wake. He was making for Tamanu, and as I turned my head instinctively, I saw Staub in his canoe abreast of the point of Koro, rising and falling on the swell just beyond the break of the sea. The long barrel of the pistol rested on his left forearm as he sighted. The spray flew up close to one side of me, and an instant later I heard a third report. He had outwitted us smartly, hauling his canoe — I suppose — over the reef between Koro and Ragi, launching it through the breakers, and paddling around outside where it had never occurred to us to look for him. Only Pahuri's quick eye had saved us; even with the swell and at that long range, Staub's pistol was not to be trifled with. One thing was in our favor: when he wished to shoot he had to stop paddling, and when he paddled he could not shoot.

Marama and I were running in a series of bounds, as everyone has seen dogs run through shallow water; the exertion was telling on old Pahuri, but Fatu seized his arm and hustled him along. I suppose thirty seconds passed between Pahuri's first shout and the moment when we gained the land. The bark flew out from a palm bole two yards from Fatu's head, and I heard another flat report from the sea. We faced about, taking refuge behind the palms. Staub took up his paddle, chose his moment with considerable skill, and steered the canoe in

through the surf. She touched the reef; he sprang out and began to wade toward the land, pushing the canoe and keeping a wary eye ahead. I realized the desperate situation we were in.

"Waste no time!" I warned the others. "He has trapped us. There is no bush here and we cannot go back."

We set off southward at a trot, dodging among the palms and turning our heads from time to time to glance backward. It was as I feared: Staub had left his canoe hauled up on the north end of Tamanu and was on foot behind us, driving us before him like game. There would be no hiding or doubling back on this island, where scarcely a trace of the old bush remained. As long as daylight lasted, Staub could drive us before him on the narrow land between sea and lagoon. Three hours of daylight remained, and Tamanu was only eight miles long. And with the current running out through the pass the strongest swimmer could not hope to gain Ragi on the other side. We were badly caught, indeed.

Staub was not built for running, and I fancy he was so sure of us that he was taking his time. By trotting and slowing down occasionally to a fast walk, we had no difficulty in keeping out of range ahead of him.

"Do you think we can swim across to Ragi?" I panted.

"No," replied Fatu. "The current never slackens there; we would be swept out to sea."

"Then what are we to do?"

Pahuri grunted, and I saw a look of growing consternation on Marama's face. A rumbling growl came from Fatu's great chest. He touched the edge of his axe, which never left his hand.

"Listen, and I will tell you," he said. "I am tired of always running away. Let us stop and separate. I shall hide as best I can behind a palm bole while two of you double back on the outer side, and the other close to the lagoon. He will be trying to shoot in all directions at once, and at that moment I will spring on him and cut him down. Who knows — perhaps no one will be hurt — except the Purutia, that is!"

But I shook my head. Fatu's scheme seemed overdesperate unless as a last resort. I had a conviction that Staub was not a man to lose his head, and I had a deep respect for the pistol in his hand. And the thought of his shedding still more blood was intolerable.

We were moving southward. Staub was two hundred yards behind us and saving his ammunition. But he came on grimly, as we could see from time to time when we glanced back. He knew as well as we did that the deep water flowing seaward between Tamanu and Ragi was impassable without a boat. He was gaining a little, and we broke into a trot.

Marama seized my arm, turning to me with eyes alight.

"I have it!" he exclaimed excitedly, "the cave of the shark!" It was our turn to exclaim now; the

idea was like the feel of solid land to a drowning man. And at that moment we were within a mile of the place.

In the old days, when I had spent a diving-season with my uncle on Iriatai, we had harpooned a large shark that menaced the divers, and discovered its lair in a great under-water cave. Exploring the place after the shark was dead, Marama and I had found that it ran in like a tunnel under the coral, and rose into a wide, low-vaulted cavern, where we rested on a ledge and breathed the pure air filtering in from above. A ray of light came in through a chink between two of the great coral boulders wedged together to form the reef, and we had seen on the ledge skulls and stone implements, and a little pot-bellied heathen god. The place had been a refuge of the aborigines of Iriatai — now scattered and extinct — where they had taken shelter during the wars and raids of heathen days. We knew the way in, but Staub might search for a month and never find the entrance.

I clapped Marama on the back.

"I never thought of it," I confessed, "but we shall be safe there till night falls and we can make our way back to Koro in the darkness. If it were not for Lem we could stop in the cave as long as we wished, going out by night to get food. Come! You and I are younger than the others; let us run on either side of old Pahuri, taking his arms. We have another mile to go, and we must be so far ahead of the Purutia that he will not see us enter the lagoon."

I laughed aloud in the reaction of new hope. "I would like to see his face when he misses us!"

We made good speed for that mile, though the pace told on Fatu, and the engineer was dead-beat when we reached the high land that told us we were nearing the cave. This part of Tamanu is the highest land on all Iriatai, a place where some ancient hurricane has piled up a mass of coral boulders several yards above the level of the sea. Staub was well out of sight in the rear; his short legs and heavy body handicapped him in the race. We trotted to the fringing reef that bordered the lagoon shore.

"It is here," said Marama; "this is the place!"

Just as he was, clad in a pair of dungarees, he waded across the reef and plunged into the deep water beyond. A moment later his head broke water and he beckoned to us. "Make haste!" he urged us. "Dive before he comes in sight!"

One after the other we drew long breaths and plunged down into the blue salt water. I was the last. It was dark in the tunnel, but there was a glimmer of purple light at the end, and it did not occur to me till afterward that another shark or some monstrous octopus might have made the place his home. I found the others dripping on the wide ledge, faintly illuminated by the ray of light I remembered so well. The cave was unchanged except that the little heathen god of stone had fallen on his face. After a time Pahuri shook his head, like a man who has done enough for one day.

"Whew!" he gasped. "Twenty years ago I would

have thought nothing of that swim, but at my age a man cannot go long without taking breath."

Fatu raised his hand for silence. "Listen!" he whispered.

We strained our ears, and it seemed to me that I could hear a faint noise of footfalls overhead. Then for an instant we were in darkness. The light returned as suddenly as it had been cut off, and we knew that Staub, missing us in the region of tumbled boulders, was exploring every cranny that might have furnished a hiding-place. But though he prowled about, pistol in hand, within a few yards of us, we were as safe as if he had been on another island a hundred miles away.

I thought, as I squatted on the ledge, listening intently, that after a time, when Staub went to the south, I would swim out and break back to Koro, picking up the canoe on the way. But perhaps the same idea occurred to the Seefalke's bosun. Staub must have feared that we would break back for the canoe and Koro; he had a fixed notion, I am sure, that we were hiding among the boulders. At any rate we heard—or thought we heard—the faint sounds of his passage for a long time, till the light in the cave grew dim and we knew that night was falling on the world outside.

The time had come to venture out; it would soon be too dark to swim through the tunnel without risking wounds from the poisonous coral, and once darkness set in, we would be prisoners till moonrise at eleven or twelve o'clock. I knew of a place close

by, at the edge of the high fringing-reef, where a swimmer could enter a narrow crevice and spy out the land, unseen from shore. I turned to Fatu.

"Let us go out now," I said in a low voice, "you and I. The others had better stop here; if we are not back by the time the moon comes up, they can swim out and steal back to the bush of Koro. We will get the canoe if the German has not gone back. I need your strength in case we catch him napping. Follow me, and I will show you a place where we can hide for a little while before we go ashore."

"Take me with you!" urged Marama.

"No, stay with Pahuri," put in Fatu; "three make more noise than two."

I entered the black water and swam quietly toward the tunnel that led out of the cave. It was an eerie place by night; I had an uneasy feeling that some monstrous creature might reach up from the depths at any moment to drag me down. Finally I drew a long breath and dove. The opening at the far end of the passage was still outlined in a faint glimmer of light. Six or seven long, easy strokes took me through without a scratch, and a moment later my head broke water outside. I expelled my breath noiselessly and filled my lungs with pure night air. It was late twilight, and here under the lip of the fringing-reef my head was invisible from shore. A hand touched my shoulder; Fatu had come up without a sound.

"Come," I whispered in his ear. "Do you see the gulley in the coral yonder? We can hide there till it

is quite dark. Let me be the lookout — you are too big to keep out of sight."

I entered the gulley first, with Fatu close behind, and he lay in the water while I raised my eyes to the level of the reef, very slowly and cautiously. But, peer as I might, I could see no sign of Staub. Dusk gave place to darkness and I was flexing my muscles to stand up when Fatu seized my shoulder in a grip that made me wince. He was listening with a rapt intensity; his marvelously quick ear had caught some sound inaudible to me. Then, after what seemed a very long time, I heard it: the faint dip and splash of a paddle somewhere on the lagoon. The skipper of the Tara was trembling with excitement. He turned his head.

"He is coming," he breathed softly. "Stop here, Tehare; take the axe and make no sound. Leave this to me!"

I knew now that the canoe was approaching our hiding-place, for with every moment the sound became more distinct. Fatu wriggled himself around in the gulley and slipped out toward the lagoon. An instant later he launched himself into the deep water and was gone. Not the faintest splash betrayed the presence of the swimmer. I knew what he had in mind. He would approach Staub unseen, dive, come up by the canoe and overturn it with a single heave on the outrigger. Once in the water, the German would be like a child in his hands.

A minute passed — two minutes, three minutes, four perhaps. I waited in a sort of agony of expectation,

but there was no sound saving the regular dip of the paddle, coming closer all the time. Then all at once the quiet was broken by an uproar of heavy splashing and shrill, half-strangled shouts. Silence followed, and after a little while I heard a murmur of low voices, and strangest of all, Fatu's voice, raised in a hearty laugh.

"Eh, Tehare!" he called to me. I hailed back and he went on: "It is Lem! I had nearly strangled him before I knew! The Purutia has gone back to Koro, he says."

Before long I saw them approaching in the starlight, pushing the swamped canoe. Lem was one of the rare Chinamen able to swim. He dragged himself on to the reef and hobbled to where I was sitting. His hand went up to feel his throat.

"Hello, John!" he said. Then he laughed shrilly as he touched his throat. "Too much stlong! Fatu s'pose me allee same Pulutia man! Ha! Ha!"

"Lem watchee — watchee lagoon side," he went on in reply to a question from me, "no see canoe long time. Then see — ocean side! Tumble down ati tlee — lun, lun, no can do! Plitty soon hear *bang! bang!* — see Pahuli lun — ha! ha! Old man lun plenty fast! Then Pulutia man come ashore, leave canoe, go 'way. Me think catchee canoe velly good. Catchee canoe — pull him lagoon side — paddle litlee way out — wait long time. Sun go down. Pulutia come back — no see canoe — plenty mad! He go Kolo. Lem think maybe you dead — maybe 'live — go look see."

"The Chinaman has done well," remarked Fatu, who had emptied the canoe and hauled it up on the dry coral close by. "We shall be able to live in safety on the islet now. But the German must be killed."

"What had we better do now?" I asked.

"The canoe will hold four if we go carefully," said Fatu; "one man will have to stop here. Since Lem could never dive into the cave, I think Pahuri had better stop. We can gather a few coconuts for him when the moon rises; there are plenty among the driftwood on the beach. To-morrow night I will come myself and fetch him. We others had better paddle north to the islet, where we can sleep and rest a little without fear."

We slept on the motu that night, the islet where my uncle's divers had been encamped two years before. Our sleeping-place was in a cranny between two boulders piled up by the storm — out of the wind, and sheltered from the glare of the sun except during the hours about noon. Staub had made the same place his lair, as we knew from traces in the sand; and on the same sand was written the tragic story of Ivi and Ofai — the killing, and the dragging of their bodies to the lagoon.

As we lay half dozing through the hours of the long, hot, idle day, Marama and I made a plan we put into effect that same night. Our enemy was still at large, and we would not be able to start our ship-building till we had gotten rid of him. Sane or insane, Staub was waging against us a war of extermination, and now that he had lost the canoe, his only hope

would be to lurk in the thick bush and take us by surprise. But since the southern half of Koro was the most thickly wooded land the hurricane had left on Iriatai, that would be the logical place to look for him. This was our plan: in the morning, an hour or two before dawn, we would be landed on Koro, or rather on a coral "mushroom" we knew of, about three hundred yards from the beach. While it was still dark, we would swim ashore and station ourselves in hiding-places where we could watch without being observed. Then, in the evening a little after dark, the canoe would come to our mushroom and wait to take us back to the islet. I knew Staub for a methodical member of a methodical race, and I counted on the idea that he would instinctively return to the same sleeping-place at night. Once we knew where that was, we could land in force and take him by surprise.

"The plan is good," remarked Marama, when we had discussed the details for the twentieth time, "like you, I think he will return to the same place to sleep. He will be watching by day, hoping for a chance to shoot us, but he will be forced to sleep a little at night."

Fatu fell in with the idea when we talked it over with him. He hated the inaction it entailed for him, but he realized that he was not cut out for the rôle of a spy. And Pahuri was too old and Lem too clumsy for such a task. "But take care!" cautioned the skipper. "If you are killed, I shall not dare face your uncle again!"

The night came at last — a busy night for Fatu, who was to cross the lagoon to Ragi for a load of drinking-nuts, paddle south to fetch Pahuri, and set us ashore before dawn. He would have close to thirty miles of paddling within the nine hours he could safely allow.

Fatu pushed off at about eight o'clock, for it seemed best to keep Staub ignorant of our whereabouts, and we had agreed not to use the canoe by day. Marama and I had been gathering shellfish on the side of the islet away from Koro, but though they were excellent and plentiful, we were too thirsty to enjoy food. The moon was up and it was long past midnight when the canoe returned, Pahuri paddling with the butt of a palm frond in the bow, and a great stack of green nuts amidships.

No beverage in the world is more delicious to a thirsty man than the cool, sweet water of a young coconut. When I had swallowed half a gallon of it, I began to realize how hungry I was, and the humble shellfish, scorned a little while before, were now devoured eagerly.

Fatu was calling me.

"It is time we started," he said, "we have a long way to paddle, and dawn is only two hours off."

Marama and I did the paddling, taking care to make no sound as we drew near the land. Finally I handed my paddle to Fatu and began to look for the bearings of the coral shoal which was to be our rendezvous. The waning moon gave enough light to make me fear that we could be seen from shore,

but moonlight is deceptive in this respect, and with any luck at all I knew that we could land unseen. In the days when I was diving for pearls I had often anchored my canoe close to the mushroom we were looking for, and in daylight I am confident I could have paddled to it without a moment's delay, but now, in the dim, silvery light of the moon, we wasted half an hour in finding the place. Marama saw it at last — a gigantic mushroom of coral, twenty feet across and rising on a long, thick stalk to within a few inches of the surface.

"Get the bearings well in mind," I whispered to Fatu. "See, we are directly off the point, and those two old palms are in line. We shall swim out tonight as soon as it is dark. I think you will be able to find us in the starlight. If we see you before you make us out, I will splash a little, like a turtle at the surface."

The skipper nodded.

"There is no need of swimming all the way to shore," he whispered back. "Wait! I will paddle you close to the beach."

Marama and I stripped and made two little bundles of our clothes. Fatu ceased to paddle, and the canoe lay motionless on the lagoon, flat as a sheet of glass. We lowered ourselves into the water without a sound and swam for the beach, holding our clothes above the water in one hand to keep them dry.

I had chosen my hiding-place before the first gray light of dawn appeared in the east. It was on the edge of a dense thicket a little way north of our house

and about midway between the lagoon and the sea. I lay facing the lagoon through a screen of leaves, where I could overlook the dim trail once used by my uncle's laborers. A man traveling north or south on the island would naturally follow this track, especially now that Koro was grown up with bush, and I hoped that sooner or later Staub would pass by. There was little danger of surprise, for the bush about me was so thick that no man could have made his way through it without noise, and I had taken care to obliterate my spoor in the sand with a tuft of leaves. Marama was stationed in a similar place four or five hundred yards to the south, and between us we felt hopeful of success.

Our landing on the beach had been an anxious moment; both of us, I think, dreaded that Staub might have sighted the canoe and concealed himself with insane cunning to shoot us down point-blank. But nothing had happened as I stole ashore with quickened pulse, and now, secure in my hiding-place and confident in my fleetness of foot if pursued, I felt an assurance I had been far from feeling half an hour before.

Moonlight was giving place to the indistinct grayness of a new day. A wild rooster crowed not far off, and presently, with loud cacklings and a flurry of wings, he and his wives descended from their sleeping-place. A great robber-crab, of the kind called *kaveu* by the natives, with claws like a pair of tinner's shears and bright blue legs, came crawling backward down a coconut palm, stopping now and then to gaze

about warily. My mouth watered at sight of him, for they are rare on Iriatai, and their rich flesh, fattened on coconut, makes a feast for a king. Then I heard the staccato cluckings of a hen summoning her brood, and saw the wild chickens come around a bend in the path thirty yards away. The little rooster came first, slim and magnificent in burnished red and gold, then a brace of pullets, and then an elderly hen, followed by a brood of half-grown chickens. The rooster stopped, clucking shrilly by an ant hill and pretending to eat the larvæ his busy claws uncovered; the pullets came running to share the food, and the hen, ruffling her feathers angrily, summoned her youngsters and drove off the junior members of the harem with spiteful pecks. I watched this little scene with interest. It was odd, I thought, how these birds, only a few generations removed from the barnyard, had reverted to the ancestral type. The rooster had the look of a jungle cock, and the hens, slender, active, and feathered alike in neutral grays and browns, looked wild as grouse.

The sun was up now and, as its level rays struck the path, I saw the rooster scratch a hole in the sand, lie down awkwardly on his side, and extend a wing to the warmth. Suddenly he sprang up and seemed to listen.

"*Tuk! tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk, tuk!*" he cackled warningly. Then, so suddenly that I gave an involuntary start, cock, hens, and chickens sprang into the air and whirred away like partridges. Next moment I saw what had alarmed them. It was Staub.

He was following the path from the north, moving slowly and warily, stopping to listen from time to time. The chickens must have given him a start as well, for his head was thrust forward and his right hand fingered the pistol at his belt. His small blue eyes, set close together and inflamed with lack of sleep, blinked in the sunlight. He halted, came on a little way, and stopped again, almost abreast of me and scarcely ten yards off. I held my breath in intolerable suspense, hardly daring to look at him for fear of catching his eye. Finally, after a minute that seemed an hour, he moved on, walking with a bend of the knees and a queer rolling gait that made me think of some huge orang-utan risen from all fours. Then his broad squat figure passed out of sight around another bend to the south. I stretched my muscles and drew a great breath of relief.

There was no time to waste, for Staub might be doing a kind of morning round, from which he would return at any moment. My task was to trail him back, as quickly as possible, to where he had passed the night, and to take exceedingly good care that I left no tracks of my own.

The woodcraft I had absorbed unconsciously on the ranch at home, ever since I had been old enough to ride a horse or handle a gun, stood me in good stead that day. Many a time, riding out at dawn with my father's men, I had trailed our half-wild cattle through the hills, or tied my horse under a live oak and set off on foot, rifle in hand, to track down some fat young buck.

If Staub had been barefoot, as I was, I might have failed to profit by my good fortune in sighting him, but he was wearing boots. For two hundred yards to the north, his spoor was written large in the sandy trail. I took care, as I moved northward, almost at a trot, to keep off the path. Then the big square-toed boot tracks ceased abruptly, and I began to cast about for a sign, at fault for a little while. Presently I found what I was looking for: a place where the coarse dewy grass had been pressed down and bruised, ten yards from the path and toward the outer beach. The ground was so rocky just beyond that it would have been difficult to trail a shod horse, but I saw a freshly broken twig and then a splendid print of Staub's boot, outlined in moist sand. I was on the edge of a five-acre thicket of pandanus, thorny and impenetrable, the old trees rising twenty or thirty feet, and the ground beneath covered with a dense growth of young plants. A man afraid of being attacked while he slept could have discovered no more ideal hiding-place, but for five minutes or more I could find no further tracks and no way in. Yet I knew, as surely as though he had told me, that somewhere in that tangle of bush Staub passed his nights.

Five minutes went by and I was still at fault, beginning to wonder if the German, for all his homicidal mania, were not too clever for me after all. Then, by good luck, I caught sight of a pandanus leaf, long, spear-pointed, and edged with formidable thorns, which hung down, newly broken. It marked the entrance to the thicket; perhaps it had scratched

Staub's face as he crawled out, and he had bent it back incautiously in a fit of annoyance. At any rate, it gave me the clue I needed. Screened by the thick young plants with leaves that made a prickly arch overhead, I found a sort of tunnel that led into the thicket, and entered on hands and knees. The bleached gravel was sharp and it hurt my hands, but it left no betraying tracks.

The tunnel wound this way and that for fifty yards before it opened suddenly on a little glade surrounded by impenetrable bush, floored with coarse grass, and open to the sky. And there, in the shade of an hibiscus tree, I found what I was looking for. It was like the lair of a wild animal: a few coconut husks and a place where a heavy body had pressed the harsh grass down. The only sign of man's occupation was an unopened box of pistol cartridges, half concealed in a tuft of grass. For a moment I was tempted to take them, before I perceived the foolishness of the idea.

I had seen enough and I did not linger in the glade. As it was, the three or four minutes it took me to crawl out through the passage were as unpleasant as any I can recall. At every turn I expected to meet Staub face to face, and I knew that if such a meeting occurred, only one of us would leave the meeting-place alive, and that one would most certainly be Staub. At last I came to the entrance by the broken leaf, reassured myself by a hasty glance this way and that, stood up in relief, and made a run for the bush beyond the path. I was

filled with elation at my good luck, but the return trip had shaken me and I wanted to regain my composure in security.

Often, in the years that have passed since then, I have blamed myself for the foolhardiness of what I did after I had discovered Staub's lurking-place. My excuse was youth and the prospect of a long, hot, tiresome day. At any rate, I "got away with it," as they say, and I suppose success is a justification in itself. But if Staub had caught me in the top of my coconut palm, helpless to resist or escape, he could have potted me at his leisure. And he would have done it; there is not the slightest doubt of that.

Rising from the clump of bush in which I had taken refuge, there were six or seven tall old coconut palms. The trade wind was making up, and their tops swayed all of seventy-five feet above the ground. As I lay there on my back, gazing up at the green fronds high overhead, I had a sudden idea. I had a long day ahead of me and nothing to do. Why not climb one of those palms, install myself among the thick fronds like a bird in its nest, and pass the rest of the day there? From such a lookout I would be able to see over the pandanus and into Staub's hidden glade; peeping out through the leaves, I would know whether or not he was at home when night fell. The idea was so attractive that its foolhardiness never occurred to me. I rose, opened my clasp knife, and peeled off a long, stout strip of hibiscus bark.

In the old days, when Marama and I had been thrown together so much, the native boy had taught me to climb the coconut palm, an art few white men have occasion to master. My uncle had warned me to be careful, but he was no believer in coddling, and he let me have the fun of climbing for my own drinking-nuts.

First I twisted several strands of green bark into a kind of rope and tied the ends together. Then I thrust a foot halfway into the loop at one end, gave the middle section a few twists, and looped the far end over the other foot. The loops passed over and under the instep of each foot, with eighteen or twenty inches of stout rope between. This kind of climbing, made possible by the grip the rope takes on the rough bark of the palm, cannot be done on a tree that grows straight up, but nearly all coconut palms slant at various angles from the perpendicular, and a man with his feet fastened as mine now were can swarm up on the high side of the slope at astonishing speed, moving at a gait that suggests a slowly hopping frog.

I had already picked my palm, the most northerly of the group. It slanted to the south, so that I would be able to climb the side away from Staub, and its slender bole was sheltered to some extent by the other palms. I clapped a hand on each side of the rough trunk, perhaps a foot in diameter, jerked my feet up so that the cord between them gripped the corrugations, and straightened my body for a fresh handhold higher up. A minute

later I was perched among the fronds, well concealed and comfortable, with a leg on either side of the central shoot. By parting the leaflets that screened me, I found that I commanded a bird's-eye view of Staub's hiding-place, and that all Iriatai was spread out beneath me like a map: the distant pass, the lagoon, the islet, Ragi, Koro, and Tamanu. But in all that expanse I could see nothing to indicate the presence of man.

Presently I became aware that I was thirsty, and hungry too; and remembering a chance remark of Marama's, I resolved to find out if it were true that a coconut could be picked, husked, and eaten without descending to the ground.

A great deal has been written about the coconut, but I have never seen half of its wonders described in print. I remember a Sunday evening after my first visit to the South Seas, when I was browsing through an old anthology of poems from my father's bookshelf, and how I chanced to find the reflections of the poet, Herbert, set down three hundred years ago: —

> The Indian's nut alone
> Is clothing, meat, and trencher, drink and can,
> Boat, cable, sail, and needle, all in one.

Old Herbert put it very well, and I was surprised to learn that the coconut was so well known in the England of his day; but if he had really understood the palm and its manifold uses, he might have said a great deal more. If man, instead of the Creator, had designed the coconut for his own use, he could

scarcely have made a better job of it; and without meaning the least sacrilege, there is little else in Nature of which the same may be said.

There is something uncannily human about the palm; its span of life is precisely that of man, and it passes through well-marked stages corresponding to infancy, childhood, vigorous youth, maturity, and tranquil old age. And when one thinks of the thousands of people who pass their lives beneath the suspended clusters of heavy nuts, one almost begins to believe, with the savage, that the friendly coconut looks down with its three little eyes and chooses a safe moment to drop.

On many a coral island there are tribes of men who have no other food than fish from the sea and coconuts on land. Used at different stages in its growth, the nut furnishes a variety of wholesome dishes, some good for babies, others for hungry men, and still others for toothless old people who can eat nothing else. I wonder how many people know that a baby whose mother dies on the day of its birth can be reared in perfect health on a diet of the jelly scraped from inside the green nut? The heart of the palm furnishes the finest kind of greens, cooked or raw; the various fermented foods made of the half-ripe nut seem to have all the virtues of cheese. The fully ripe nut, grated and then squeezed, gives a rich sweet cream, delicious in coffee, good as a sauce for desserts, and superlative — as I know from experience — when flavored and frozen into ice cream.

The wood of the old palm is tough, almost as hard as iron, and so heavy that it will sink in the sea; it is used to build canoes and houses, to make weapons and implements of many sorts. The leaflets of the fronds make thatched roofs, hats, baskets, matting, and sails for canoes. The midribs of the leaf, like wire in strength and stiffness, make the best of brooms, and are used in bunches, fast to a long pole, to spear small fish. The odd "cloth" binding which attaches the frond to the bole is a natural strainer for the squeezed-out cream, and it is often used for clothing in bad weather. The husk of the nut furnishes coir cordage which floats in the sea, is marvelously elastic, and resists salt water longer than any other kind of rope. Drinking-cups, bowls, and bailers are made from the shell, and when not needed for other purposes it can be burned like the bark of the palm, making a charcoal equal to any in the world. The water of the young nuts enables thousands of people to live where no other water fit to drink can be obtained, and those who yearn for intoxicants have only to cut the head of the bud, catch the juice which runs out, and ferment it into palm toddy or distill it into one of the vilest forms of alcohol.

But I must halt in the midst of the catalogue — I have said more than enough.

Marama had told me something I had not heard of before: how when he was a small boy he used to climb the neighbors' palms, hide among the fronds,

and drink his fill of sweet young nuts without giving a sign of his presence. He said that the point of the unopened bud was hard and sharp as a husking-iron, that one could pick one's nut, husk it, and stow away the refuse aloft. There, high in my swaying crow's nest, I made the experiment. The stem of a young nut, which no amount of pulling could break, yielded to a few twists, and I husked it on the pointed implement Nature had provided, apparently for that purpose. Then, opening my clasp knife, I prodded the three little eyes till I found the soft one, and pierced it with a circular cut. The sweet effervescent water bubbled out like champagne; no hardened wine-bibber ever enjoyed champagne as I did the *vai hakari* gurgling down my throat. I tucked away the bits of husk in the hollows at the base of the fronds, and when my nut was empty I took it in my left hand, revolving it slowly as I gave it a series of smart raps with the handle of my knife. Presently it split open in two hemispheres, each lined with the delicate jelly called *nia*. I had had my drink, and now I made my meal.

As the sun reached its zenith and began to decline, I grew more and more drowsy. The food I had eaten, the warm sun, and the gentle swaying of the palm, all combined to bring on an uncontrollable desire for a nap. I gave up after my chin had struck my breast-bone for the tenth time, and there, astride of a brace of fronds and with arms clasped about the central clump, I fell into a dreamless sleep.

It must have been five o'clock when I awoke, so

startled for a moment that I clung to the fronds about me desperately. I had not been in the least danger of falling, for deep down in all our minds there is a little sentinel who keeps sleepless watch at such times — the same who wakes the tired mother when it is time to feed her child, and saves fat passengers from falling out of upper berths. Parting the leaves cautiously, I leaned forward for a look at Staub's retreat. He had returned while I slept, and now he was husking a coconut on a sharpened stake driven into the ground.

The German was horribly close, so close that I pulled my head back involuntarily. It seemed to me that I could have tossed a pebble so as to fall on his broad back. But he believed himself unobserved and unobservable, and being hungry no doubt, he was very earnestly at work, giving signs of exasperation at the difficulty of the unfamiliar task. Much as I feared and hated the man, I could not restrain a smile at his clumsy efforts. The nut slipped from his hands and rolled away; he sprang on it as though it had been alive and impaled it on the stake with all his strength, trying to wrench off a section of husk by main force. A native girl ten years old would have husked twenty nuts in the time he took over one, but the job was done at last, and I saw him hammering at the shell with a stone.

With my sunburned face and weather-beaten clothes, I knew that I was safe as long as Staub did not see me move, and I watched him that afternoon with the same zest, intensified by the spice of danger,

which I have always felt in watching wild animals. He had become, in my mind's eye, a figure of ogrelike horror, and to see him close by and unaware of my presence was like watching some grim old man-eating tiger, fierce, cruel, and of legendary wariness. When he had eaten a brace of coconuts, I saw him unload his pistol, clean it carefully, and replace the clip of cartridges; at last, toward six o'clock, he lay down in the lengthening shadow of the hibiscus tree. I thought he was asleep, but he must have been very much on the alert, for once he sat up abruptly as his ear caught some sound inaudible to me.

The sunset that evening was the most beautiful one I have ever seen — all crimson and gold and rose; but I was so impatient to give Fatu my news that the brief twilight seemed all too long. Night came at last, moonless and ablaze with the splendid southern stars. I slid like a lizard down the trunk of my palm, tossed my bark rope into a bush, and made my way cautiously to the shore of the lagoon. Half an hour later I crawled out, dripping, on the coral mushroom where Marama awaited me.

I was whispering my news to Marama when we heard a faint splashing sound and turned to strain our eyes in the starlight. The canoe was approaching, a shadow on the dark water, and Fatu had splashed a little with his hand, like a rising fish, to attract our attention. We took our places noiselessly and I motioned the steersman to move still farther offshore before I spoke. He paddled as his ancestors had paddled when raiding seaside villages at night — a

long, slow stroke, and a recovery without lifting the blade. The canoe moved swiftly, but there was no sound save the almost inaudible suck and gurgle of swirling water.

At about four hundred yards from the beach I raised my hand, and faced about toward the stern. "I have found his sleeping-place," I said softly; "he is there now, and I think he is asleep."

Fatu fingered the edge of the whetted axe between his knees before he replied.

"We are three," he remarked; "we have the canoe to care for, and Marama does not know where the Purutia sleeps. There is only one thing to do: let Marama wait by the coral shoal till we return, while you and I go to the thicket of pandanus." He flexed one great arm and chuckled without mirth, deep in his chest. "I shall need no help to deal with this killer! And if I were small as Pahuri, the thought of the blood he has shed would give me strength!"

The skipper of the Tara was divesting himself of shirt and trousers. Under his dungarees he wore a scarlet waistcloth, which he now knotted tightly about him as divers do. Finally he took up his paddle and did not stop till we were within fifty yards of the beach. "Come, Tehare," he whispered as he lowered himself, axe in hand, into the lagoon, "we have work to do, and it must be finished before moonrise."

"Take care to make no sound," I cautioned him when we stood dripping on the beach. "Follow close behind me, and remember that he is wary as an old bear."

We stole inland like a pair of ghosts, feeling our way very slowly in the dim starlight. Once I set my bare foot on the back of a land crab and had to summon all my self-control to avoid an exclamation at the pain of his nipping claw. At last we came to the trail and I led the way north, counting my steps. Two hundred and fifty — three hundred — this should be the place. I halted for a moment, put my face close to Fatu's, and laid a finger on my lips. Then I began to grope my way toward the outer beach. We were on the edge of the pandanus thicket, but it took me what seemed an eternity to find the entrance to the tunnel through which I had crawled only fifteen hours before. I was beginning to wonder, in fact, whether I had not gone entirely wrong, and led Fatu to another patch of bush; the starlight and my anxious thoughts endowed the whole place with an unfamiliar look.

But my senses were sharpened by anxiety and at last I found what seemed to be the place. Crouching on hands and knees, I felt the sharp coral underfoot and reached up to grope for the broken thorny leaf. It was there. I touched Fatu's naked shoulder and led the way.

It must have taken us the best part of half an hour to crawl those fifty yards. The tunnel was black as the Pit, and now, by night, it was beset by torments Satan might have devised. The sharp bits of coral, unseen and unavoidable, cut like a thousand tiny razor blades; and the pandanus, provided with an armory of hooks and thorns, made me swear under my

breath till I wondered if I did not deserve the tortures I felt. I had not thought of the danger we were in nor of the fight ahead; I dreamed only of the moment when I would be able to stand up once more and nurse my wounds. Then the inky darkness gave way to the faint light of the stars. We had reached the end of the passage.

My eyes, dilated in the dark, now seemed like the eyes of a cat. I saw the little glade, the solitary hibiscus tree, and something dim and bulky lying in the grass. Fatu needed no prompting; his eyes of a neolithic savage had seen all I had seen, and more.

The giant captain of the Tara sprang into action with a suddenness that took my breath away.

Bounding like a tiger that has lain in wait, he was across the clearing in a flash. His bare feet spurned away what I had not seen, the unsheathed pistol lying within an inch of Staub's hand. Then, moved by an impulse at which I could only guess, he flung away his axe. Next moment his great sinewy hands were about the German's throat.

I was so taken by surprise that seconds passed before I jumped for the pistol. Staub was on his feet now; he struggled with the strength and fury of a wild beast. Suddenly, with a twist of the shoulders and his enormous neck, he wrung himself free from Fatu's hands; then, feinting, and pivoting on his left foot, he drove the heel of a heavy boot square into the muscles of Fatu's stomach. It was the *savate*, and the blow would have doubled up an ordinary man. It brought a grunt from Fatu, and I heard

Staub mutter, "Schweinhund!" between set teeth. At that moment I regained my wits and pulled the trigger of the pistol within a yard of the German's head. But there was no report, for I had forgotten the safety catch.

Fatu turned on me in a passion.

"Don't shoot!" he roared. "This man is mine!"

Staub rushed him as he spoke, seized him about the waist and brought him down. They lay there for a moment, grunting as they turned and twisted so fiercely that I could scarcely tell which man was on top. I had released the safety catch now, but I could see no chance to shoot.

The rest happened faster than I can set down words to tell it.

Exerting all his strength, Fatu tore himself free of Staub's great clutching hands, bounded to his feet, snatched at the German's ankles, swung his broad misshapen body clear of the ground, and sent his head crashing against the gnarled trunk of the hibiscus tree. The memory of that horrible soft thud brings me a shudder, even to-day. Staub's body pitched to the ground and he lay there, twitching for a little while, with a broken neck.

Fatu squatted on the grass, his breath coming in great sobs. At last he stood up painfully, moving arms and legs as though he feared to find broken bones or tendons torn.

"Aue!" he exclaimed solemnly. "What a man! Never have I struggled with one so strong and fierce!"

There in the darkness, while we waited for the

moon to rise, we buried the mortal part of Hochbootsmann Staub, digging with a pair of pointed sticks. The moon came up at last; we braved the thorny tunnel once more; and when we reached the beach, Fatu hailed Marama, hovering offshore, to tell him that Staub was dead and that he might paddle back to the islet to fetch the others.

XII

THE BUILDING OF THE SAILING-CANOE

The events of the night had dispelled all thought of sleep. While we waited by the house for the others to come, Fatu busied himself in kindling a bonfire on the beach. I sat a little way off in the moonlight.

Staub's cold-blooded killing and his own violent death had shocked me profoundly; we were safe now from his mania, but our company of nine was reduced to five. I thought of the Tara's cabin boy, of Amaru, whom I had begun to like, of Ivi and Ofai, who had been with my uncle so long. Then I began to speculate, idly and gloomily, on the motives that had prompted Staub. Was it possible that he had seen the German boats pass to the northward, outside the reef, and finding us on shore, had resolved with a crazy man's logic to carry on the war against his country's enemies? Or had he gone amok, Malay fashion, as Pahuri thought, to make war against all mankind until killed himself? Well, he was dead now, in any case; our task, short-handed as we were, was to build some kind of vessel and get away from Iriatai. I thought of the Sumbawa. We had her anyway — the only pleasant news I would be able to give Uncle Harry. But why he or anyone else should take so much interest in a small derelict steamer with a cargo of machinery, I could not understand.

Fatu's voice brought me out of my reverie.

He was standing knee-deep in the lagoon, twenty yards away. "Come and help," he called. "There are plenty of clams here and I have a fire going. If you will help me dig them we shall have a meal ready when the others come."

I rose and waded out to him. The bottom was sandy at this place and thickly inhabited by the shellfish the natives call *kahi*, which look very much like clams and are quite as good. We worked our bare toes into the sand, feeling this way and that, and when we came on one of the little colonies of clams we scooped down to dig them and tossed them ashore. In half an hour we had enough for a dozen hungry men. The fire had burned down to a mass of embers by that time, and when we had rinsed our clams and gathered them in a pile, I became aware all at once that I was starving for cooked food. Fatu glanced from the stack of shellfish to the fire and smacked his lips.

"I cannot wait," he remarked, apologetically; "there are more than enough for all!"

Nothing could have been simpler than the way we cooked our meal. We laid the live clams on the coals, glowing with heat, and when the shells opened wide we knew that they were done. Their heat and the rich salty taste of them made the simple meal as satisfying as any feast. We were still eating when we heard a hail and saw the canoe approaching, guided by the glow of our fire.

"So you killed him, eh?" shouted Pahuri to his

friend. "Ha! You are eating. What is the food? Is it cooked?"

Lem, in the bow, was the first to step ashore. He sniffed; his eye took in the pile of clams and the fire, and before he spoke he set a dozen of them on the coals. "Too much hungly!" he said.

The natives, who have an enviable capacity for tears and laughter within the same half hour, were in high spirits. Fatu was forced to tell every detail of the night's happenings, while they chattered, exclaimed, and cooked batch after batch of food. They have no books; story-telling takes the place of reading with them, and they have developed the art as our own ancestors must have done before they had knowledge of the written word. They have a power of observation and memory now lost to us, and I listened with interest while Fatu devoted an hour to a story I would have told in a tenth of the time. He described his thoughts and feelings as he paddled to the rendezvous at the coral mushroom and when he had heard my news; he told with vivid detail of our search for the passageway into the thicket and of the crawl through the tunnel. Then he halted his narrative at the point of our emergence in Staub's secret glade, to tell how he felt, how I must have felt, and what the German's feelings probably were. Finally, when his listeners had been worked up to the highest pitch of suspense, he told how he had rushed on Staub, describing the struggle so vividly that the audience listened with gleaming eyes and quickened breath.

"Tehare would have shot him," he concluded, "but I cried out that he was mine. It was right that I, a Maori, should kill him, for he had shed Maori blood. But he was a man, I tell you! They say of me that I can lift a greater weight than any man in these islands, but his arms were stronger than mine! He had the better of me at close grips, and more wrestling skill; that was why I seized his ankles and broke his neck against the tree. It seemed almost a pity to kill a man so strong and brave!"

As he finished his story, Fatu reached out gingerly to take a roasted clam off the coals.

Dawn was brightening the east. Presently, one after the other, we strolled across to the house and lay down on our bed of leaves to sleep.

It was early afternoon when we awoke and made another meal. As we lolled about the fire, with a pleasant new sense of security, Fatu showed his fitness to command. He had been awake longer than the others, and he must have been thinking over our situation.

"Listen, all of you," he said; "we must get to work now, and I will tell you what to do. Our task is to build a sailing-canoe big enough to take us to Tahiti. Its length will be four fathoms or four and a half; it must be strong, light, and able in a sea. We shall need the five pieces of the hull and sinnet cordage to lash them together; the mast, the boom, and wooden stays such as old-time folk of the Tuamotu used. The sail will be of pandanus matting. Now to divide

the work so that each man will have the task he is fitted for. Do you, Pahuri, take the Chinaman and make our sail and cordage; you understand the work of our ancestors better than I. Marama and I will cut out the hull and the paddles. Tehare, our white boy, is not accustomed to Maori work, but there is no better fisherman among us; let him, if he is willing, provide us with food so that we can have all our time for other work. What do you say to my plan?"

Pahuri answered with an emphatic nod. Like other old men, he lived much in the past, and his opinion of the younger generation was not favorable. "You do well," he remarked, "to leave the sail-making to me. I can remember when we had no other sails but those of matting, and the sails we made were not like the poor coarse mats the women weave to-day! But you will see! As for cordage, I can soon teach Lem the art, which requires patience rather than skill." Fatu smiled at his old friend.

"Good! It is settled, then. Why not take Lem and start this afternoon? I am going out to the sunken ship with Tehare and Marama to see what we can find."

We launched the canoe, — the three of us, — Fatu took his place in the stern, and Marama and I paddled with the butts of coconut fronds. The sharp narrow little vessel flew over the lagoon, leaving a track of foam. It was not yet mid-afternoon when we drew near the Sumbawa, where she lay in eight or nine fathoms of water, a little south of the islet.

The sun was hot and there was not enough wind

to ruffle the landlocked water of Iriatai Lagoon. The top of the derelict's funnel was just awash, and her two thick stumpy masts rose a few yards into the air above. Somewhere in the frayed and tattered standing rigging Staub must have taken refuge when she went down, and remained until the sea was calm enough to allow him to swim to the islet. As we passed over the sunken hull, I could see the top of the bridge and chart-room close to the surface. Fatu was making ready to dive. We floated close to the foremast, and I had a hand on a rusty stay.

"Wait for me here," directed Fatu as he lowered himself into the warm water.

Craning my neck over the side and shielding my eyes from the sun, I watched him pull himself down the stay to the level of the deck and swim off deliberately among the purple shadows. Presently, after what seemed a very long time, he reappeared, rising with slow, graceful movements of arms and legs. His head broke water alongside and he expelled his breath with the pearl-diver's shrill, eerie, whistling sound.

"I am afraid there is not much of value to us," he said as he rested with a hand on the gunwale; "here, take this; we can heat it in the fire and use it for piercing holes." He held up a badly rusted marlinespike. "We shall never be able to get the main hatch off," he went on; "the cover is of heavy canvas, and I thought it might save us the labor of making a sail, but it is so rotten that it fell to pieces in my hand. Now I am going down again."

He grinned at me, drew a long breath and seized the stay once more.

Somewhere on the Sumbawa there must have been things we needed badly — axes, saws, nails, and food in tins. But though Marama and I took our turns at diving and explored as much of the ship as a naked diver could, our only finds were a coil of light rope in good condition, and a heavy hinge Fatu managed to wrench off a door with his axe. It was of some white rust-resisting metal, and the skipper thought it might make an adze. Perhaps our explorations were not so thorough as they might have been; if the others felt as I did, they were not sorry when we gave up the attempt. To open a door and swim into a room fathoms deep under the sea is an experience I do not hanker to repeat.

When we paddled away homeward, the sun was low in the west.

Next morning Fatu sharpened his axe and set to work to fell the great ati tree close to the house. Using the axe as a cold chisel and pounding it with a stone, he had cut the hinge in two, and now Marama was grinding and shaping the bit of metal to make an adze. Pahuri and Lem were busy husking ripe coconuts and putting the husks to soak in the lagoon while they made a stack of the nuts themselves. I made a clumsy basket of bark and set off in the canoe.

Fatu had put me on my mettle when he proposed that I keep our camp supplied with fish; I have always loved fishing and prided myself on what little skill I possess. But our two fishhooks were lost when

Staub opened fire on us on the reef, and though I had hoped to find at least a nail or two on the Sumbawa, I had had no luck. For the present I would be able to get shellfish in abundance, and to spear with a pointed stick the little rockfish in the pools, but without hooks and lines there was no way of catching the larger fish all hands preferred.

The morning was glassy calm. I was making for the stretch of reef which separates Koro from Ragi, where I thought the shellfish would be plentiful. Suddenly, fifty yards ahead, the back of a small turtle broke water. I ceased paddling; the canoe drifted at slackening speed and stopped. The turtle lay basking in the morning sunlight. His head was away from me and his hind flippers—*fumure*, the natives call them — moved gently and contentedly. I was close enough to see the rough serrations of the shell which told me that the turtle was of the hawksbill variety, rare in those seas. No faintest breath of wind was astir. I laid down my paddle noiselessly and stripped off shirt and dungarees. Then, with the utmost caution, I lowered myself into the lagoon.

Swimming with long, slow strokes, I approached within ten yards before I dove. A moment later I opened my eyes; there he was, above me and just ahead. A single stroke sent me to the surface; I crossed my arms, seized a hind flipper in either hand, turned the turtle over, and held him easily, in spite of his clumsy struggles. Turned upside down, they are nearly as helpless in water as on land. By good luck I had cut a bit of the Sumbawa's line as a

painter for the canoe, and when I had piloted my captive alongside I made fast to a flipper, released him, and hove myself aboard. He paddled off frantically, but he was too small to tow the canoe at any speed, and when I had put on my clothes I hauled him in and laid him in the bottom, upside down. The hawksbill turtle is very different from the big green edible turtle of the South Seas; he grows to less than one half the size, and the thick plates of shell on his back furnish the pretty material we call tortoise shell. They were once plentiful, but their value nowadays causes them to be pursued relentlessly wherever found. This one was about twenty inches long, and from what I had heard I knew that he would fetch thirty or forty dollars in any civilized place.

Presently, as I paddled eastward, I came to a place I remembered well. It was here on this shoal, where the bottom, only a few fathoms down, was clearly visible, that Marama and I had had our first experience of pearl-diving. What fun we had had, and how I would have enjoyed an opportunity to live those days over again! Why not try a dive or two, I thought, for the sake of old times and to see how the shell was holding out? And the muscle which binds together the two shells of the pearl oyster is excellent food. I had been studying the bottom passing beneath me like a rainbow-tinted panorama; now I raised my head. The current was dead slack and the wind would not come up for another hour. Though my rope was too short for

anchoring, I could go down safe in the knowledge that the canoe would not drift away.

In the old days I had been equipped like a native diver with a heavy bulb of lead. Pulled down by this weight, one can reserve all one's breath for work on the bottom. Though the depth was only thirty or thirty-five feet, I now found that the effort of swimming down shortened my stay under water perceptibly. And I had no diving-goggles, which dimmed my view of the beautiful submarine world I remembered so well. I reached the bottom, nevertheless, and could see well enough to make out the great *margaritifera* oyster attached to the coral on every side. In an instant I had wrenched loose a pair of them, breaking the fibrous fastenings with a sharp twist, and was rising to the surface, one in each hand. Though my ungloved fingers were bleeding from numerous little cuts, I went down again and again. The place fascinated me — the purple twilight of the depths, shot with shades of green and blue, and the strange growth of live coral, an underseas forest through which shoals of gay little fish darted like flocks of parakeets. I dove till the ruffling lagoon announced that the trade wind was making up.

It was noon when I returned to camp. The others ceased their work when I hailed, and crowded about the canoe to inspect my catch. There was the turtle, a stack of pearl oysters, sea urchins of two kinds, and a dozen big *Tridacna* clams, each one a meal for a man.

"A turtle!" exclaimed Pahuri. "How did you catch him? The shell is worth two hundred francs!

But his flesh is not good to eat. That largest clam falls to us — eh, Tehare? Go and rest while I roast it and prepare a sauce of coconut."

Marama was regarding the oysters with glistening eyes. He took out his knife and began to open them, feeling carefully for pearls. "No luck," he announced when the last one had been opened, "but no food is sweeter than this white part. And I am hungry to-day. Look! Fatu and I have been spelling each other with the axe and our tree is down."

The noble ati which had once shaded our camp lay prone on the sand.

Pahuri called me aside when the others lay taking a short siesta after the meal. "We must have fish, large fish," he said, "but we have neither hooks nor lines. By good luck you have brought both pearl shell and tortoise shell, of which the old-time Maoris made their hooks. Shall I show you how to go about it? Your line will be quickly made, for I have found *orongá* growing close by. I have told the Chinaman what to do, and I will take the afternoon off to help you. Our work is important, but food is more important still."

He led the way through the bush in the direction of Staub's burial-place, and presently he halted to point out a group of low scrubby bushes of a kind I had not noticed before. "This is orongá," he said. (The plant belongs to the family of *Urticaceae*, I believe, and from its bark, as I was to learn, the natives make fishlines stronger than the finest cuttyhunk.) Pahuri opened his clasp knife and began to

cut the straight young shoots, thick as a man's finger and three or four feet long. As fast as he cut them he stripped off the bark, until he held a bundle of it in his left hand. When we returned to camp he borrowed Fatu's axe, chose a limb lopped off the ati tree, and smoothed one side of it skillfully. Then, returning the axe, he beckoned me to a shady place.

Squatting over his flattened stick of wood, on which he laid strip after strip of bark, inner side down, Pahuri scraped off the rough outer bark with a broken bit of pearl shell. "You must judge by the color," he remarked, "so as not to scrape too far. If still dark green, you have not gone far enough; if white, you have cut too deep and you must throw that bit away. My father — it was fifty years ago, but I remember as though it had happened yesterday — used to lay a split banana stalk alongside and go by that."

When all his bark had been scraped, Pahuri laid it on the hot sand of the beach to dry, and began to search carefully along the water's edge. I did not know what he was looking for until he picked up a couple of coarse-grained volcanic stones. The Tara had made many a trip in ballast to fetch the copra from Iriatai, and a geologist might have been puzzled to find pieces of water-worn volcanic rock scattered along the shores of the lagoon. The old man was enjoying his afternoon thoroughly; he was proud of his primitive skill, and glad of this chance to impart some of it to me. Now he was chipping the longer bit of stone to a rough point, with light, sure,

glancing blows, and a halt now and then to appraise the result.

"Go and look over the pearl shells," he said; "choose one that is sound, flat, and not too thick." I was not gone more than five minutes, but when I returned with what he wanted, he had finished his tool of stone. He seated himself on the firm sand at the water's edge, picked out the spot for his drilling, and began to turn the tool against the shell, pressing strongly and dashing water on the hole as the work progressed. In less than half an hour the tool broke through the scaly outer surface, leaving a clean round hole about an inch in diameter.

The old man grunted with satisfaction. Bedding the shell down firmly in the sand, he now went to work with the point of his stone to scratch a circular groove around the hole and a quarter of an inch away. The shell was hard, but the stone was harder still, and once he had traced his circle, the work progressed rapidly. When the groove was deep enough for safety, he began to chip the shell away on all sides with quick blows of a stone. A moment later he held up a little ring of nacre, still rough on the outer edge. Two scratches of the stone chisel and a light blow removed about a fifth of the circumference, and Pahuri stood up. "Your hook," he announced, not without pride. "All it needs now is a point and a little smoothing."

I had seen hooks of this kind in museums at home, and I knew that the Kanakas often bought the white man's steel hooks and bent them into the same

shape. But I did not know at that time that in mechanical perfection and efficiency this odd circular fishhook is infinitely ahead of ours. With its incurved point, and the line made fast to the inner side of the shank, there is no need of a barb; the pull on the line drives the point deep into the fish's jaw, and not one in ten escapes.

Pahuri was examining his strips of bark, thin as paper and now almost dry. "The line would be better if we had time to dry it slowly, in the shade," he observed, "but never mind, it will be strong enough. Come over yonder by the house where we shall be out of the sun."

He seated himself on a block of coral and began to tear the bark into long, fibrous shreds. Presently he tucked up the tattered waistcloth which was his only garment, and rolled a strand of fibre between the palm of his hand and his naked thigh. When he had twisted three strands in this manner, rolling away from his body, he brought them together with a sharp reverse twist, and held up a yard of line, round, uniform, and perfect as though made by machinery. It looked easy, and the length could be increased indefinitely by working in fresh bits of fibre; but though I did my best to learn the art, I could never succeed in keeping the size uniform nor in giving the three strands their final close hard "lay." Pahuri's line was about the size of the expensive thirty-six-thread cuttyhunk used for sword-fishing with rod and reel, and guaranteed for a breaking strength of seventy-two pounds. Long afterward,

at home, I found a few yards of orongá among my things, and was curious enough to give it a test. After long service on Iriatai and all the lapse of time, it did not break till I had loaded on weights that totaled one hundred and twenty pounds.

I wish I had space to tell more of the building of our canoe. I can claim only a small share in the achievement, for I was busy with my fishing and could only lend a hand during odd moments of leisure now and then.

Everyone who has read Captain Cook's *Voyages* — and those who have not, had better hasten to read one of the most interesting books ever written in English — will recall the great navigator's visit to the king of Tahiti's shipyard, and his astonishment as he inspected a vessel over a hundred feet long, just completed with native tools.

Neolithic man, with his implements of polished stone, made up in skill and patience what he lacked in tools, and the modern Kanaka, only three or four generations removed from the stone age, has preserved some portion of these ancestral qualities. Fatu, Pahuri, and Marama, at any rate, with their clasp knives, a single axe, and a crude adze made of a bit of sharpened hinge lashed to a crooked stick, built and rigged in less than five months' time a sailing-canoe I wish I owned to-day.

She was about twenty-five feet long and three feet beam. Her underbody — I can think of no other word to describe this part of the hull — was made of

the hollowed-out trunk of the ati tree. The freeboard was built up with specially shaped pieces hewn out of large trees for bow and stern, and a pair of planks to make the gunwales, an inch thick, a foot wide, and twenty feet long. The underbody was hollowed out partly with fire and partly with the axe, but the other four sections of the hull were made by sheer hard work and patience. The two long planks involved an amount of work staggering to contemplate; each was roughhewn from the heart of an entire tree and brought down to thickness with axe and adze. Finally, when all was as smooth as the adze could make it, Fatu and Marama set to work with bits of coarse cellular coral, rubbing and smoothing till the wood seemed to have been sandpapered inside and out. Then the parts were assembled and the work of fitting began — at first with light glancing blows with axe or adze, then with knives used like spoke-shaves, and finally a patient rub, rub, with the coral, till no ray of light showed through the seams.

When all was ready, and even Fatu's critical eye was satisfied, the marlinespike was heated in a fire of coconut shells and the holes for lashings were pierced in pairs, above and below the seam. Lem had mastered the art of cinnet-making long before this, and working with Chinese industry he had turned out many hundreds of fathoms of the strong elastic native cord, plaited in three, exactly as women braid their hair. Coconut cinnet stretches like rubber and when lashed under strong tension it will not relax for a year or two.

They began one morning, and when I returned from fishing that night, I found the stern piece and the two gunwales lashed in place, so firmly that the canoe seemed hewn out of a single piece of wood. The gunwales were braced crosswise with thwarts, and when the bow piece was made fast to the underbody and the four short vertical seams strongly joined, Fatu and Marama plugged the holes with bits of soft wood and gave the seams a final caulking with resinous ati gum. The little vessel, with her high sharp bow and graceful line of sheer, was pleasing to the eye as she stood propped on a pair of logs. When her mast was stepped and her outrigger in place, she would be ready for the sea.

Early in our stay on Iriatai I thought of keeping track of the days by cutting notches in a tree, Crusoe-fashion, but I soon found that my companions, in some automatic way which was more or less of a mystery to me, always knew the date and the day of the week. They kept track of time in order to observe Sunday, I suppose, for they never worked on Sunday, and out of respect for their ideas I never went fishing on that day. How deeply our religion had penetrated their minds I cannot say, but I know that they believed in God and in the rewards and punishments of a future life, and that they kept the Sabbath as rigorously as any old Puritan. We slept late on that day. Sometimes Marama and I went for long walks or swims in the lagoon, and old Pahuri, who had a weakness for good food, spent his Sunday mornings in preparing a little feast for all

hands. Lem was the only one who worked, pounding and scraping his fibre tirelessly, or sitting on the sand in a shady place, braiding the cinnet held taut between his naked toes. He never seemed happy unless his hands were occupied. On the Tara, when the dishes were washed, the galley tidied, and the coppers shining like burnished gold, he used to invent new tasks for himself. Lem's dislike of idleness was quite as pronounced as the feeling most of us have about steady, monotonous work.

My own work, during those months on Iriatai, could not have been more congenial, and the fact that all the fish I could catch would be eaten with relish by my companions made the sport doubly enjoyable. There is an infinite variety of fish in Iriatai Lagoon and in the sea outside the reefs — small and large; fish with dark flesh and white flesh; some light and delicate enough for an invalid, others providing rich strong food for active men. Knowing something of the different kinds and the methods of catching them, I did my best to vary our diet from day to day.

The natives, before the white men came to their islands and gave them new ideas, recognized no weeks or days of the week. Their year was regulated by the appearance of the stars, and their word for year, *Matahiti*, means "rising of the Pleiades." Their month was the lunar month of primitive men all over the world, and the Polynesian word *marama*, like our own "month," means simply "a moon." And instead of learning the names of the seven days of

the week, as we learn them in infancy, the native child had to learn the names of thirty days from new moon to new moon. A knowledge of them was essential, for they regulated all fishing and all work in the plantations, and as far as fishing goes, I can vouch for their usefulness. On certain days of the lunar month, for example, it is useless to gather shellfish or crustaceans of any kind, for they lose weight at these times till there is nothing on them — or in them — to eat. Then there are nights, recurring regularly as the moon itself, when certain kinds of fish seem to go mad and lose all fear of hooks and nets; and there are three nights each month — full moon, the night before, and the night after — when the land crabs emerge in thousands from their holes and wander about in companies, so tame that one can pick them up. My uncle had taught me something of these mysteries, and now old Pahuri refreshed my memory, helping me to work out a little schedule which would ensure success. One day he suggested that I try for *mara*, a huge blue fish of the wrasse kind with scales as big as a man's ear. In the old days, when they enjoyed their sport of archery, the island chiefs shielded their left arms from the bowstring with mats of their great blue scales.

"You have never tasted the mara?" Pahuri asked. "No? Nor I, for twenty years! He bites when the moon is at the full, as it is now, and then his flesh is white and sweet — ah! my mouth waters at the thought of it! Shall I tell you how to catch him, an art dead among my people to-day? Go out in the

morning when it is calm, and paddle along the face of the coral where it shelves off steeply into blue water. Look down carefully as you go, and presently you will see the head of a mara peeping out of the hole where he spends his life. You will know him at once by his color and his size. Take two things with you — a stick three or four feet long, and a few land crabs pounded up in bits. Crabs are his food; he will take no other bait. When you have located your fish, make the canoe fast to the coral, take a handful of crab, swim down under water and poke it into the hole with the stick. You will not see the fish, but presently he will look out again, see what you have left, and eat it. Do this three or four times till he becomes tame, and remember not to hurry, for he chews his food like a man. Then, when he has become accustomed to you, bait your strongest hook, swim down with it, and push it into the mara's hole. Give him plenty of time once more; he will not feel the hook till you tighten the line. Get into the canoe and paddle away from the shoal, slacking out line as you go, and when you think he has the hook well in his mouth, heave, and heave strongly! The mara will try to turn and retreat into the depths of his hole. If he succeeds, you will never be able to pull him out. Your only hope is to get him out of the hole at the first pull, which will take him by surprise; once out, he will rush away into deep water where you can play him till he is tired out."

Pahuri's description of mara-fishing interested me, and next morning, provided with a short stick and

the bait of land crabs, I set out for a place where the channel curved in close to the north end of Tamanu. The deep water was bordered by vertical cliffs of coral, rising to within six inches of the surface and pitted with innumerable holes and crannies. Gazing down with the morning sun behind me, I could see fish of every shape and color flitting along the submarine cliff or peering out of their holes like young swallows in the nest. An hour passed before I sighted what I was looking for, but I could have spent a happy day studying the life of this strange and lovely world. The parrot fish, fantastically beautiful creatures, seemed to be the conservative members of the cliff-dwelling community. Each one, whether six inches or two feet long, had his little room in the coral, where he dozed with his head just visible at the entrance, rushing out occasionally at passers-by with an air of outraged irritability that sent the intruder off in a panic, no matter what his size. But when the stout defender of his home emerged for a little promenade, he became a different fish at once, shy, timid, dashing for safety at the menace of a fingerling — a policeman off his beat.

Finally, about two fathoms down, at the entrance of a large dark hole, I saw what I knew at once must be a mara's head. The vivid electric blue was unlike the blue of any parrot fish, and the size of the head, with its big golden eyes, told me that the fish would weigh at least a hundred pounds. I moored my canoe to the coral, slipped into the water, and swam down with the stick and a handful of broken crab. As

Pahuri had predicted, the tenant of the hole was not in sight when I arrived, but I pushed the first course of his meal into the doorway and clambered into the canoe to watch. Five minutes passed. Suddenly the big head emerged with a flash of blue, and I saw that the jaws were munching the food I had left. When they ceased to move I took down a second supply of crab, and this time I saw the mara plainly in his hole. In half an hour the fish had lost all fear of me and even moved out a foot or two to seize a bit of crab before I pushed it in to him. I marveled at the creature's beauty and great size; his deep thick body would make a two-days supply of food for the five of us, in spite of Fatu's enormous appetite.

At last, baiting my hook carefully and leaving numerous coils of slack line in the canoe, I pushed the Judas-tidbit into the hole and swam to the surface hastily. A jerk released the painter; I threw overboard the coils of line and paddled twenty yards out into the channel. My heart was beating fast as I took in the slack of the line very gently, till I could see in the clear water that it was almost straight. The time had come.

I was so worked up, so eager to capture this huge strange fish, that I gave an involuntary shout as I struck — once, twice, to set the hook, and then a heave with all my strength to pull the mara from his hole. The second pull fetched up against a tremendous weight, alive with the thrill and quiver a fisherman loves. Next moment the fish was out of his hole and under my canoe, plunging down madly

into the depths of the channel. I tried to snub him. It was like snubbing a running steer. The stern of the canoe, where I was sitting, went under water; she was half filled before I had sense enough to slack away, and Pahuri's strong slender line had cut my right hand almost to the bone. But I was not aware of this till afterward.

Four times, putting all the tension I dared on the line, I brought the great fish so close to the surface that I could see his body flashing back and forth; each time, wild with alarm at sight of the canoe, he put his head down and rushed for the bottom while the line hissed through my hands. But his struggles and the steady pull I maintained were exhausting him, and at last I had him on the surface alongside, too far gone for another rush. Paddling with one hand and holding the fish on a short line with the other, I towed him to the shallows, jumped overboard, and passed the end of the painter through the great panting gills. A heave and a slide took him over the gunwale, and he lay flapping ponderously in the bottom of the canoe. I gave a second shout and did a few steps of a war dance, which terminated by planting an incautious foot on a sea urchin.

It was then that I realized that I was almost as tired out as the fish, and that my hands were badly cut by the line. But I thought little of my wounds as I paddled exultantly back to camp, admiring the strange and beautiful creature at my feet. He was an enormous wrasse, akin to the familiar tautog of the New England coast, and I knew from the size of his

scales that he was a true *mara tea* — the "archer's mara."

As I drew near our camp I gave an imitation of the weird yodeling call of the native fisherman, returning with an exceptional catch. Pahuri dropped his work and came down to the beach at a trot; his cry of pleasure and astonishment when he saw what was in the canoe brought the others crowding about to examine my fish. The old man patted the bulging scaly side.

"Fat!" he exclaimed with glistening eyes; "this fish will be like butter on our tongues! It was I who taught Tehare how to catch him; now you will see that Pahuri knows how to cook the mara as well. In heathen days this fish was taboo to all but those of chiefly blood — too good for common men! I shall bake him whole in the oven like a pig and serve him with a rich sauce of clams and coconut."

Fatu smiled.

"And this is the day for a feast," he said. "Our canoe is ready to be launched. Come, all of you, it is only half an hour's work. Then let us take the rest of the day off and enjoy ourselves. In another week we shall be ready to set sail."

XIII

THE WESTWARD VOYAGE

Our little vessel stood ready for the sea. Her mast was stepped and stayed, and the big sail of matting, which had cost Pahuri so many weeks of work, was laced to its boom. It was the native form of the leg-of-mutton sail, like ours except that the apex of the triangle, instead of being at the masthead, was at the foot of the hoist, causing the boom to rise at an angle of forty-five degrees. The outrigger, a twenty-foot log of light, corky wood ten inches through, was lashed in place parallel to the hull and about eight feet distant on the port side. The hull had been polished with fine-grained coral and rubbed with coconut oil till the bright wood glistened like mahogany.

Marama was standing at my side.

"She is handsome, eh?" he asked, with the pride of a workman who loves his work, "and look! We have given her a name!" He pointed to the bow, and there, neatly carved in the rich ati wood, I saw the word: TAMATA. The name, which means "try," struck me as remarkably apt. Fatu was trundling half a dozen rollers in our direction, with pushes of his bare feet.

The launching was quickly done, for the natives are clever at moving heavy weights. A heave and a pry with a stout pole, a run on the rollers, a halt

while the ones behind were being brought to the bow once more, a final shout from all hands, in which Lem's shrill Chinese voice joined — and the Tamata floated lightly on the quiet lagoon. Fatu had an anchor ready, a heavy block of coral through which his axe and marlinespike had drilled a hole, and when we sat down to our midday meal I could not resist glancing up from time to time for a look at the graceful little sailing-vessel riding at her moorings before the house.

The skipper called me aside after lunch. He patted his great muscular stomach with a hand like a ham. "Aué!" he remarked with satisfaction, "I have never tasted better fish. And there is enough left for to-night and to-morrow. But I want to talk with you. We are nearly ready to sail for Tahiti, and we must try to think of everything. See if you can help me. We need a pair of bailers, paddles, and at least one big steering-sweep, something to carry a few gallons of fresh water in, and a supply of food. For the last we will load as many husked coconuts as the canoe can carry; we can eat them and drink the water too. Then we must make some bonito hooks in case we have the luck to run into schools of fish. What else can you think of?"

"Why not dry a supply of fish before we start?"

"Can it be done without salt?"

"I think so; the air on the low islands is very dry. In America we make what we call jerked beef without salt, and it will keep for a long time."

"Take Marama then, and see what you can do. I

will set the Chinaman to husking coconuts while Pahuri and I make paddles and bailers, and try to make something that will hold enough water for us. Can I leave our bonito tackle to you?"

The dried fish was a success, as I had hoped. We cut thin flakes of the flesh and hung them in the sun like clothes on a line. Each night, to avoid the dew, the growing pile was brought indoors, and we found that four days of the hot, almost equatorial sun was enough to make the fish nearly bone-dry. In this state, if free of moisture, it would keep for many weeks, and I knew that it would have to be pretty smelly to be rejected by hungry men.

In moments of leisure, Marama and I worked on our bonito hooks, and we made them with the care of a jeweler stringing pearls, for their success might mean life to us in the last extremity. One by one we went over the pearl-oyster shells I had brought in, grinding down the back with bits of coral till the sheen of the nacre was visible. There was not one of them, we thought, at which a fish would look twice; they were of the gold-lipped variety, and the mother-of-pearl was of a yellowish hue. So we took the canoe and spent a whole day diving in different parts of the lagoon, taking samples from the rare patches of black-lipped shell. I suppose we brought home twenty or thirty pairs, and when we looked them over that evening, we had the luck to find three that even old Pahuri declared tempting to the bonito. They had a pale silvery shimmer, like moonlight on still

water, and rainbow lights played on the surface of the nacre.

I had never seen shell lures made Kanaka fashion, but Marama knew how it was done, for the older fishermen have to this day a notion that the fish will not take freely a lure cut out with tools of iron. The shell is almost circular, thick at the hinge part and growing thin toward the outer edge; the middle section is the thickest, soundest, and brightest, and only one first-class lure can be cut out of each shell. We outlined the little imitation flying fish with scratches of Pahuri's stone chisel, buried our shell in moist earth, leaving the part we wanted to get rid of exposed, and heaped red-hot coals about it till the nacre was calcined. Firing first one side and then the other in this way, the moist earth preserved our lure intact and left the rest of the shell so soft that it was only a moment's work to trim it off roughly with a stone, avoiding all risk of splitting or chipping the precious central part. Then we rubbed the edges smooth, and polished the back with the fins of a small shark — the sandpaper of the South Seas. The hooks, bound to the after end of the lure, were cut out of tortoise shell with our knives, and little tufts of coconut fibre were lashed behind them in imitation of a fish's tail. At last we had three lures, complete with hooks, lines, and a twelve-foot pole of fau wood.

While we dried fish and worked on our bonito tackle, Fatu hewed out paddles and a pair of big wooden scoops for bailing. A supply of water was our most perplexing problem. There was not a

barrel, a cask, or even a kerosene tin on Iriatai. But old Pahuri, prowling about the north end of Tamanu, found a tree that had been snapped off by the hurricane. The heart of the stump was rotten, with a shell of sound wood all around, and probing down with a sharpened stick, he found that the rotten heart gave way to sound hard wood about a yard above the ground. It was a natural barrel, needing only a little shaping and hollowing out with the adze and the addition of a tight cover, to make us a twenty-gallon water-container which would stand amidships, lashed to a thwart.

The Tamata passed her trials on a Sunday afternoon, in a brisk southeast wind that set the whitecaps to dancing on the lagoon. All hands were aboard and the cargo in place, for Fatu was a careful man. Her big brown sail thundered in the wind as the anchor came up. The skipper was at the helm; at his command Marama close-hauled her and she foamed across the lagoon on the starboard tack, with the outrigger alee. A yachtsman from home would have stared to see the way she footed it; canoes of this type, sailing alongside a steamer with the wind abeam, have been known to do fourteen knots. The wind freshened; when we came about at the end of a three-mile board, there was a breeze that would have made us shorten sail at sea. But we were exhilarated by the swift motion, and the fine qualities of our little vessel were showing. She was on the port tack now, with her outrigger on the weather side, and Fatu's eyes sparkled as he shouted

to Marama and me to climb out on the iato poles. "We'll try her on a reach!" he called. He bore off and Pahuri slackened away the sheet, while Lem crouched in the bilges, drenched with spray. Marama and I crawled farther and farther away from the hull as she began to heel; the outrigger rose from the water, and the Tamata seemed to rise and fly, skimming the whitecaps like a hydroplane. Perched on the outrigger, swaying and bounding above the rushing water, I could not suppress a shout of wild delight.

That night was our last at the camp on Koro. When supper was over and I lay half dreaming in the twilight, I saw the natives go in a little group to the graves of Amaru and the cabin boy behind the house. It was their fashion of bidding their dead comrades farewell; the thought of Ivi and Ofai, the jolly brown sailors I had liked so well, brought a lump to my throat. The Pacific rumbled softly on the outer reef, and the colors of a fire opal still lingered in the western sky. I wanted to be alone with my thoughts, for I fancied there was small chance that I would ever see Iriatai again.

My memories of the island would not be happy ones, but I loved the place in spite of the trouble and death that had met us there. And if our sojourn had been peaceful to the point of monotony, my memories would still have been tinged with sadness, for the beauty of Iriatai — its soul, if a lonely bit of land in the midst of a vast ocean may be said to have a

soul — was sad. Sadness was in the cries of the sea birds, wheeling above the breakers; in the unceasing, melancholy thunder of the breakers themselves; in the deep organ-note of the trade wind humming through the palms. And the beauty of the bright lagoon and the sea and the sky was unearthly — I can think of no other word. It had none of the homely, reassuring quality of a landscape in Europe or America, with ordered fields, and farmhouses, and cattle filing home in the dusk. In such places man feels that the world was made for him. For the time being, he seems to have conquered Nature and made her serve his ends. But the message of Iriatai is different. The voice of the sea murmurs without regret: "A million years hence I shall still be breaking on these reefs. I chanted this song before man's existence, and I shall be chanting it after he has ceased to exist. The same winds will blow, the same palms toss their tops, and the same lagoon sparkle in the sun, long after the last man is dead."

A little sound beside me made me turn my head; Marama had stretched himself out on the sand without a word. We lay there till the light in the west faded and the stars came out.

Lem built up the fire before daybreak and all hands had a tuck-in of cooked food — our last for some time to come. There was no place to build a fire or carry fuel in the canoe. In the morning calm, while the sun made its appearance on a cloudless eastern horizon, we paddled down the lagoon toward the pass.

Marama, in the fashion of his race, had composed a song about our voyage, and now he sang it for the first time. It was a paddling-song, that went with a slow swing, and we soon took up the chorus. The first line, which counted four strokes of the paddle, went thus: "*O Iriatai te fenua é!*" and a rough translation of the chorus, in which the swing is lost of course, is perhaps curious enough to be worth setting down: —

Iriatai was the island,
Tamata was the canoe,
Dried fish and coconuts the food,
To Tahiti the voyage,
And five the crew —
Three Maoris, a white man, and a Chinaman.
Four others are dead on Iriatai,
Killed by the enemy whom Fatu killed.
Those in their graves on Koro are two,
And where the others are, no man can say.

The South Sea Islanders have an odd style of paddling their large canoes: all paddle on the same side for six or eight strokes, then the stern man changes sides with a knock on the gunwale, and at the signal all hands swing over to starboard or port as the case may be. We were in high spirits that morning, in spite of Marama's somewhat lugubrious song, and our willing strokes made the Tamata foam along in the calm. In less than two hours we were slipping out through the pass at the south end of the atoll, where a three-knot current swept us toward the open sea. A glassy swell was running from the east, but

off in that direction a dark ruffled line advancing from the horizon showed that the breeze would soon make up. We hoisted our sail and lay there, riding the swell. Presently the boom swung over to port, the slack sheet tautened, and the Tamata gathered way on her long passage to the west.

I could write a book thicker than this one about our voyage in the sailing-canoe. It was an experience to look back on with satisfaction, but one I would not care to repeat. The memory of those days aboard the Tamata will always be fresh in my mind: the grand going we made before the trade wind; the roasting seven-day calm, when we ran out of water and food and would have died except for the migrating schools of fish that darkened the surface of the sea for miles, and the northwest gale that came at last with squalls of rain that filled our keg. That was a storm to weather in a craft like ours! We might have run before it, taking turns at bailing and wielding the big steering-paddle aft, but we grudged every mile lost, and rode the storm out to a sea anchor improvised with the spars and Pahuri's stout sail of matting. Head-on to those great breaking seas, it was a case of bail for our lives, day and night, and we kept the Tamata afloat by a series of miracles. At last, when the gale abated and no more water came aboard, we dropped like dead men in the bilges and slept for a day and a night. When we awoke, our little vessel's bows faced the rising sun, and a brisk easterly wind sent the whitecaps slapping

against her sides. Our water keg was full, but we had no more food.

I learned at that time that primitive men have senses or faculties lost to us. We had no compass, no sextant, and no log, and the storm had blown us far out of a course that seemed to me pure guesswork in the first place; but when we had rigged mast and sail once more, Fatu took the helm as confidently as if land were in sight. "Tahiti is yonder," he remarked, with a wave of his great arm. And I learned afterward that he would have made his landfall in due time.

The natives have ways of recognizing the vicinity and direction of land which seem mysterious but are quite rational when explained. They know that certain sea birds fly out from land in the morning and return to roost at night; that schools of certain small fish, hatched out in the open sea, are to be found heading for the land; that clouds piled and massed in certain ways indicate the presence of high land beneath. But the sense of direction that guides them when they are making for an island many days' sail ahead is above and beyond all this, and can only be compared to the instinct that pilots the salmon to the river mouth, or the flock of migrating geese to the same marsh year after year.

For two days, while the Tamata ran free before the wind, we swallowed nothing but water — a coconut shell for each man in the morning and another at night. During the calm we had been too thirsty to feel our hunger; now I learned the meaning of the word.

Pahuri, squatting forward with pinched cheeks and overbright eyes, scanned the horizon for signs of fish, or trailed a bonito-hook vainly alongside in the hope that some stray fish might be tempted to bite. At last I heard him shout feebly, pointing ahead with an arm that trembled excitedly. A moment later I saw what he had seen — a faint appearance of granulation on the line where sea met sky. Little by little, as we foamed along at ten knots, I made out what seemed to be a vast swarm of bees; the bees grew larger, became birds, thousands of them, circling and hovering over a square mile of sea.

Fatu turned to me.

"Bonito," he said solemnly. "They are following the small fish toward the land, which cannot be far off. Let us pray God that they will seize the hook!"

Five minutes later we were tacking back and forth in the midst of an enormous school of fish. The scene was so marvelously interesting that I almost forgot my hunger: here in this waste place of the ocean, hidden from all human eyes but ours, Nature displayed her inexhaustible fecundity. A thousand million little fish, hatched at sea, had banded together to obey the law of their being which called them toward the fresh water where their lives were to be spent. Thousands of eager sea birds preyed on them from above, and a countless horde of bonito, swift, fierce, and with insatiable appetites, hung on their flanks and fed. But the little fish closed ranks as ton after ton of their number was gobbled up, and swam steadily on to the west.

Old Pahuri, the most skilled fisherman of the Tamata's company, stood in the stern, trying the first of his lures. There was anguish in his voice while he called coaxingly to the bonito, as the older men still call: "*Tu! Tu! Tu, é!* Come on, old Crackle-skin! Come — come — come!" He shook his head bitterly as he swung the lure inboard and flipped another one out in the wake of the canoe. "They will not look at that shell!" he announced. Next moment the water bulged and swirled a foot behind the lure. Five pairs of eyes were on the bit of shell as it disappeared in a little cloud of spray. The line hissed forward vertically; the stout pole became a quivering arc. The expression on Pahuri's face would have made me laugh aloud at any other time, but I suppose my own features reflected the same ludicrous mixture of anguish and hope.

"*E Toheveri!*" he exclaimed, which told me that he had hooked one of the full-grown bonito of forty or fifty pounds weight. He had the butt of the rod under his right knee now, and was trying with the strength of both withered arms to get the fish's head up. I drew in my breath — would our tortoise shell stand such a strain?

"Hold him! Hold him!" Fatu was shouting monotonously. Then the taut line touched the gunwale of the canoe. Marama's arm shot over the side and came swinging back with the fingers clenched in the gills of the big struggling fish. There were joyful shouts. Our knives flew open with a simultaneous click. We tore at the rich raw flesh like wolves. But

Pahuri's hook was overboard without wasting a second, and he called over his shoulder: "Cut me a piece, quick! Ah! This is the shell they want!"

The steaks of raw bonito, red and nourishing as beef, put new life into us. When I had eaten as much as I dared after so long a fast, I took a sparing gulp of water and went aft to relieve Fatu at the helm. Lem could paddle a canoe, but to steer the racing Tamata, running before the southeast trade, would have been too much for his Chinese seamanship, so the three natives and I took turns at the steering-sweep.

One by one, the others lay down in the bilges to sleep. I stood aft of the rear outrigger-pole, putting all my weight on the long, heavy paddle each time a swell overtook the Tamata. With her sail bulging gloriously as she tilted on the crest of the sea, she swooped forward at dizzy speed, her sharp bows parting the water in roaring sheets of spray. The sea passed on; we jogged back into the trough, only to be lifted and sped once more. The food I had eaten and the strong fair wind, which showed every sign of lasting long enough to take us to Tahiti, made me feel alive and hopeful once more. In the middle of the afternoon, when I judged that my three-hour trick was up, I was still enjoying myself so thoroughly that I put off wakening Marama. Then, as we roared along on the back of a wave bigger than any that had preceded it, I saw what made me stare and shout.

It was a trail of smoke to leeward of us, not many

miles ahead. A steamer! In a moment all hands were rubbing their eyes and talking excitedly.

"She's heading this way!" exclaimed Fatu, "and she's dead to leeward of us. About eight miles off, I think. We're doing at least ten knots, and she must be steaming faster than that; we'll be abreast of her in less than half an hour! What shall we do, Tehare?"

"Stop her, if we can," I answered without hesitation. "I'd ask for a passage for us if she were heading our way. But I know they'll be glad to give us something to eat and enough water to fill our keg. And we can get our position from them; they might even lend us a spare compass when I explain the fix we're in."

Fatu smiled.

"Tahiti is dead ahead," he insisted gently. "If the wind holds, we shall raise the land a day and a half from now. Never fear!"

I said nothing, but I was far from feeling the confidence the others felt. With a compass and a definite course to sail, I knew that I should sleep more soundly that night.

The combined speed of the two vessels must have been well over twenty miles an hour, and the steamer came rapidly into view — a pair of odd-looking masts, two raking funnels trailing threads of smoke which joined and sped off downwind, and a low gray hull very different from what I expected to see.

"*E manuá!*" shouted Pahuri, using the native word, borrowed from English, for man-of-war. A moment later I saw that the old man was right; the ship

approaching us was of the destroyer type, and she was loafing along eastward at about quarter speed, her long, lean hull slicing into the seas. Closer and closer she came. A British ship, for she flew the white ensign aft. My mind was working with desperate haste. Perhaps she was the Regulus, detailed, as I knew from my uncle, to patrol these seas. But how were we to signal her? I dashed forward, stripping off my tattered shirt, and shouted to Marama at the helm: "Hold her straight on to pass close to the north of them! And don't let her jibe!" In five seconds I was climbing the slender, swaying mast.

We were abreast of the man-of-war now, and not fifty yards away. I could see the crowd at her rail, staring at us curiously. Two men I took for officers had glasses up. With legs clasped about the mast and clinging to a stay with one hand, I waved my shirt furiously, trying to put into the gesture the message of distress I had no other means of communicating. We shot past her counter; I slid down the mast, yelling at the top of my voice: "Hard up!" Marama swayed on the steering-paddle with all his strength, the boom whizzed over our heads, and the Tamata spun about into the wind so handily that she made what yachtsmen call a North River jibe, luffing so fast, that is, that the sail, swinging to starboard, was cushioned by the wind.

As we close-hauled her on the port tack, welcome sounds were borne downwind — shouted orders and the shrill piping of a whistle.

"She's stopping!" cried Fatu eagerly.

"Yes," I added with even greater eagerness, for I had seen the word Regulus in gold leaf on her stern, "and they're lowering a boat. Hooray!"

With powerful sweeps of the paddle Marama kept the canoe hove-to while the boat was lowered and pulled back to us. The sight of the bronzed sailors at their oars, clean and ruddy and smart, and the handsome young officer standing astern, made me realize all at once the state I was in. In my excitement I had tossed my shirt into a mass of bloody water and scales in the bilges, and now I stood naked, save for an old straw hat and a ragged pair of dungarees, cut short and frayed. From the waist up the sun had tanned me to the color of an old and much-used saddle; my hair, uncut for months, streamed in the wind, and my only pair of shoes had been worn out so long ago that my feet were as horny as any Kanaka's.

Now the boat pitched and tossed alongside and the young officer was putting his hands to his mouth. "What's the matter?" he hailed above the hurly-burly of wind and sea. "Where are you bound? Do you speak English?"

"For Tahiti!" I shouted back. "Our schooner was sunk by a German raider! We're short of food and water." The words "German raider" produced the effect I had hoped for. The officer, only a little older than I, showed his interest in the news. He gave an order and the boat moved closer still.

"Come aboard and have a yarn with the skipper," he called. "Tell your men to stay hove-to. How are

we going to get alongside with that outrigger and heathen gear of yours?"

I answered the question by springing into the sea, shouting to Fatu to stand off and on. A minute later I was hauling myself over the gunwale of the British boat. The sailors grinned at me; the young officer beckoned me aft. He smiled broadly as he took my dripping hand. "I see you're a white man," he remarked with twinkling eyes. "Gad! you chaps looked like a crowd of proper cannibals!"

"So the Hun sank your schooner, eh?" he went on, as we were pulled back to the Regulus. "Give us the yarn."

"Sorry," I answered, "but I can't — I gave the skipper my parole not to talk. All I can tell you is that they scuttled the Tara and marooned us on a coral island out to the east. But my men are free to give you all the information you want; the native captain speaks French."

"The Tara? Harry Selden's boat?"

"Yes — he's my uncle." The officer regarded me with a new friendliness.

"The deuce he is! We have n't a better friend in these parts. Old Brixton will be more than glad to see you."

"By the way," I asked, impelled by a sudden curiosity, "you saw the course we were on — would we have passed anywhere near Tahiti?"

He reflected for a moment before he replied.

"Let's see — how were you heading? By Jove! Yes. You'd have hit the island square in the middle."

The boat was tossing close alongside the Regulus. As she rose high on the crest of a sea, my companion made a jump for a rope ladder hanging from the rail, and at the next chance I followed him. A burly, blue-eyed man, clean-shaven and in snowy tropical uniform, stepped forward to seize my hand.

"So you're Harry Selden's nephew," he said warmly. "I'm Commander Brixton, and it's a pleasure to have you on board." He clapped me on the back. "Been through the mill, eh? Come aft. How about some clothes and a bite to eat before we have a yarn?" I grinned hungrily.

"Thank you, sir," I replied, "both things sound pretty good."

I did some quick thinking as we walked aft, past smiling men in uniform. "Could I talk with you alone for five minutes?" I asked. "After that I'll accept your invitation, for I've had nothing but raw fish for I don't know how long. No — none of us are really suffering."

Commander Brixton led me to his stateroom, closed the door, and motioned me to a seat on the lounge.

"What is it, lad?" he inquired kindly. "Fire away!" I glanced out to make sure that no one loitered near the open door.

"My uncle told me, in confidence," I said in a low voice, "to keep an eye open for something you were looking for — the Sumbawa."

Brixton sprang up at the word and faced me, ruddy face a shade less ruddy, and blue eyes gazing into mine.

"Have you sighted her?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir; and she's sunk in eight fathoms in Iriatai Lagoon."

"Jove! This *is* news!" His eyes sparkled with excitement. "Wait a bit!" he exclaimed, springing away to press a bell. A man appeared and took his order for a tray of food. "And tell Jackson I want a whiskey and soda," he added. "You won't have something?"

"No, thank you."

Presently the tray appeared, loaded with cold roast beef and sandwiches, and my host questioned me as I tucked this away.

"We were held up by the Seefalke," I explained between bites; "they scuttled the Tara, though the captain treated us very well. I gave him my word not to talk about what I saw till after the war, but I can tell you this: they were going to Iriatai to heave their vessel down and scrub her bottom, which was very foul, and we sighted the Sumbawa only a few miles offshore. The Germans were going to pass her, but I persuaded the skipper to tow her into the lagoon on the chance that there might be something of value aboard. They were going to maroon us, you see, and they were too short of stores to leave us any food. When I suggested that there might be a lot of tinned stuff on the Sumbawa which would be a help to us, he was decent enough to tow her in."

"'Something of value,'" repeated Brixton, half to himself. "Ha, ha! That's good! Well, go on. What happened then?"

"Then the hurricane came along and nearly finished us. Both ships parted their cables. I don't

know what happened to the Seefalke. The derelict must have struck a shoal and ripped a hole in her bottom, for she's sunk more than halfway across the lagoon. The Germans who were camped ashore went away in two boats after the storm was over."

My companion nodded.

"I know all about that," he said; "we picked them up before they had been a week at sea, and they're prisoners in New Zealand now. But go ahead — I'm ruining your meal. I'll do a bit of thinking for a moment or two."

"The Huns did n't tinker with the Sumbawa?" he asked suddenly.

"No, sir, they did n't have time before the storm."

"I'll tell you what we'll do if you're willing. First we'll pick your men up, and try to get that outlandish craft of yours on deck. I suppose her outrigger can be taken off. About eight fathoms, you say? We'll have to have a diving-machine. I'll go to Rarotonga in the Cook Islands for that. This is a British affair. Then we'll head back to Iriatai, get our job done, and go to Tahiti, where I'll put you and your men ashore. Do you mind? There are various reasons why I would like to have you on board till this job's over — sorry I'm not at liberty to explain. But bear one thing in mind: I'll have a report to make, and be sure that the credit's going where credit's due. I can't say any more. How about it?" He held out his hand, smiling, and I took it warmly.

"For as long as you like, sir," I said. "I'm at liberty now that the schooner's gone and Iriatai blown to bits by the hurricane."

XIV

THE DERELICT'S CARGO

With the Tamata on deck, where she looked absurdly small and out of place, and her crew installed forward and made much of by the friendly British tars, the Regulus headed west at full speed. The gray wisps of smoke trailing from her funnels changed to black belching clouds; her lean hull trembled as she ripped her way westward hour after hour. That passage on the destroyer was an experience I shall not forget.

Thirty-three hours later, long before daylight, we dropped anchor off Rarotonga, the principal island of the Cook Group. I could see the lights of Avarua, the village where the trade of the Group is done, and dimly in the starlight a profile of peaked volcanic land. Brixton wasted no time. The chain had scarcely ceased to rattle out of the hawse pipe when he sprang into a boat and was pulled ashore in the dark. He must have stirred things up at once, for I saw a coming and going of flashlights on the beach and the sudden illumination of a building I took for the government offices. The eastern sky was brightening now, and presently, standing at the rail in a borrowed suit of pyjamas, I saw the green, densely wooded mountains taking form in the increasing light. We were anchored on a shoal some distance offshore, and there was a passage through the reef

by which launches or small boats could come and go. Breakfast had not been served when the skipper returned, followed by a launch that carried a native diver and all his gear. The anchor came up, the twin screws of the Regulus churned the sea white astern; she swung about in a great curve and headed back to the east. In an hour the peaks of Rarotonga were faint breaks on the horizon line.

Commander Brixton had done me a good turn ashore. At his suggestion I had composed a wireless to be sent to my uncle at home, and he had arranged to have it relayed on from Rarotonga to the far-off Californian coast. And he had urged me not to be sparing of words. My message, after a great deal of thought, was dispatched as follows:—

TARA SUNK BY GERMAN RAIDER HURRICANE CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE IRIATAI DERELICT FOUND ABOARD REGULUS NOW ADDRESS TAHITI

Brixton gave me permission to mention the derelict, though not by name, and I hoped Uncle Harry would be able to make sense of my not very cheerful news.

I enjoyed every moment of our eastward passage, sleeping and resting and living like a fighting-cock. We raised Iriatai early in the forenoon of the third day. In white uniform, shoes, and cap, contributed by various members of the afterguard, I was gazing across the sea at the line of palms I knew so well when a steward approached me with a salute.

"Commander Brixton's compliments, sir," he said, "and would you mind stepping into the chart-room?"

I found the skipper bent over a large-scale chart of Iriatai. He looked up with a smile. "Morning, Charlie," he said, for he treated Harry Selden's nephew like an old friend. "I say—show me where you reckon the Sumbawa lies." I took up a sharp pencil from the table and leaned over in my turn.

"Let's see — where's the motu, the little island? Ah, here it is. And there's an eight-fathom sounding just south — that's the place." I marked the spot with a little cross.

"Good! With this weather we'll be able to tie up right alongside. Come on deck."

The way the Regulus steamed into the passage and north across the lagoon was a revelation to me. British sailors know their business, and they trust their Admiralty charts. Commander Brixton took his ship in with an assurance that amazed me, breasting the current in the treacherous pass and threading the scattered shoals inside at scarcely slackened speed. It was not yet noon when we stopped beside the sunken ship. The morning was dead calm, and after half an hour of manœuvring we were securely tied up, so close that every detail of the Sumbawa was visible in the clear water alongside.

Beneath the calm of his manner, I could see that Commander Brixton's nerves were on edge. Whatever his business was with the Sumbawa he was eager to get it done quickly, and from the glances I saw him cast to windward from time to time, I fancied that he felt some anxiety about the duration

of the calm. He stood by the rail, puffing a short, blackened pipe as he superintended the berthing of his ship. They had lowered their biggest boat and the diver stood in the stern, giving his apparatus a final inspection.

"All ready?" Brixton called down to him.

"Yes, sir."

"Go ahead, then. Get the main hatch off first and have a look in the hold. When you've some idea of her cargo and how it's stowed, come aboard and report to me."

Loafing on the after deck of the Regulus, I watched the proceedings curiously — an interested spectator. Commander Brixton was in luck, I thought, for the cloudless day and the light, scattered clouds low on the horizon told me that the calm would last. And though it was hot even in the shelter of the awnings, the air was dry, and the heat had none of the brassy, sweltering quality which gives warning of unsettled weather.

The diver had donned his weird costume and gone over the side of the boat, and I saw the English sailors swaying at the pump which sent air down to him. He came up once for a crowbar; when he went down again they lowered a hoisting-tackle at the end of a long boom and operated by an electric donkey-engine on deck, to raise the hatch. The hatch was raised, and after an hour or more I saw the diver, relieved of his uncomfortable dress, board the Regulus to make his report. By nightfall they had hoisted two big packing-cases on deck.

I had a close view of these boxes, whose contents, I thought, might explain the mystery of the Sumbawa. They were about five feet each way, and when Brixton ordered a petty officer to rub off the accumulated muck and slime, I saw that one of them was dimly labeled "Machinery." The second one had been broken into when it came on deck, and Commander Brixton stared hard at it; but the condition of the splintered wood proved that the work had been done long before. They opened this case first; I was astonished to see them remove armful after armful of what had once been excelsior. But at last, in the midst of this mass of wet rubbish, they uncovered a much smaller box, banded with steel, and with one side bashed in. I had scarcely a glimpse of it, for in obedience to the skipper's sharp order, a dozen men set to work to trundle it heavily across the deck and stow it away below.

We lay alongside the Sumbawa for two nights and nearly two more days, while the native diver worked tirelessly from dawn till dark in the hold of the sunken ship. Case after case was hoisted on deck, broken open, and thrown overboard with its stuffing of excelsior, while the little box it contained was stowed away somewhere beneath the destroyer's decks. I kept track idly, having little else to occupy my mind, and when I had counted twenty-four of them, the work ceased abruptly as it had begun. Then the Regulus cast off, steamed out of the lagoon, and headed for Tahiti, blazing a white trail across the placid sea.

The hurricane season had passed with the spring equinox, — autumn in the Southern Hemisphere, of course, — and the April weather was beautifully dry and calm. Standing on the after deck that evening while Iriatai sank and merged with the horizon astern, it seemed to me that I had never watched the termination of a more perfect day at sea. I did not notice Commander Brixton's approach till I heard his hearty voice.

"That job's finished," he remarked, "and thanks to you, my lad." He waved his pipe toward the island no longer visible. "Glad to see the last of it?"

"I don't know, sir," I answered with a doubtful smile. I had told him the story of what had happened on Iriatai, and he nodded understandingly.

"Something like the war, I reckon; those chaps in the trenches are having a bad time just now, but later on, when peace comes, they'll look back and think it was n't so bad after all."

He turned away from me as he ceased to speak, and glancing over my shoulder I saw that a petty officer stood at attention close by, with a slip of paper in his hand. The man's eyes were round with suppressed excitement and his face beamed in spite of himself.

"This just came, sir," he said, and after a moment's pause, he ventured: "and big news, sir, big news!"

Brixton gave the typewritten sheet a glance, and for an instant the wall of discipline melted away between officer and man. It was the skipper's turn to beam.

"Gad, Rogers!" he exclaimed; "I should rather think it was big news! Have this posted at once."

The man went forward almost at a run, Brixton spun about and startled me with a tremendous whack between the shoulder blades. "Do you know what's happened? Your country's declared war on Germany!"

Commander Brixton dined with his officers that evening and I sat at his right. It was a gay little dinner. These Englishmen, cheerful and casual on the surface, felt the strain of two and a half long, anxious years, and the knowledge that the great western nation, with her wealth of men and material, had come in on their side, gave them deep satisfaction. Flag-waving and the word "patriotism" were taboo to them, but their country's troubles were their troubles at heart and her welfare theirs.

Healths were drunk, songs sung, and stories told, and finally Brixton stood up, setting down a half-emptied glass of champagne.

"I owe you chaps and Selden here a bit of explanation," he began with twinkling eyes. "No doubt you're burning with curiosity, the lot of you. Well, there's no reason why I should n't tell you now, so here goes. What is the stuff in those little boxes, eh? Gold — tons of it! Mined in Johannesburg and shipped from Durban instead of from the Cape. We've been buying a lot of stuff in the States, you know, and this was going there in a quiet way; we're short of shipping in this part of the world, of course.

Well, the Sumbawa pushed off and did n't turn up. There was a row, let me tell you. The underwriters howled, and the business was too big for even Government to 'regard with equanimity,' as they say. Yes, a proper row! Then Selden's uncle gave me a tip: he'd found the only survivor of the Sumbawa stranded down in the Gambier Group. All hands but this fireman had died at sea — been poisoned, he thought. He was an Irishman, and he got the wind up — what with the dead men and the ghosts he thought he saw — so he abandoned the derelict and managed to get to the Gambiers in the skipper's dinghy. The Huns picked her up and towed her into Iriatai Lagoon — thanks to Selden; and I fancy her hatches would have stayed on a long while if he had n't come along and tipped us off."

A steward was passing around the table, filling the glasses as he went, Commander Brixton's first. He raised his brimming glass and gave me a friendly smile.

"So here's to him!" he ended cordially. "And let's all hope he gets a thumping check from the underwriters!"

We sighted Tahiti in the middle of the following afternoon. The peak of Orofena, the central mountain of the island, towers more than seven thousand feet above the sea, and on that dry clear April day I saw it first when we were still seventy-five miles off, a tiny triangle, appearing and disappearing on the western sky line. Hour after hour, as we approached

the land at about fifteen knots, the mountain rose from behind the slope of the world, till it dominated a jumble of fantastic peaks sloping away grandly on all sides. At sunset we were not more than twelve miles offshore, and the golden light on the mountains, long after the valleys and the coastal land were obscured in a dusky violet haze, was so superbly beautiful that the men by the rail scarcely exchanged a word. At last the daylight faded, the stars came out, and the lights of the little port began to twinkle far ahead.

We were steaming along the reef now, and at times, in the silence, I heard a sound like a long-drawn moaning sigh, and saw in the faint starlight the white line of a roller bursting on the coral barrier. Finally the beacon lights of the passage fell into line, and the Regulus turned sharply to port. The steady pulsing of her engines did not slow by a single beat as she sped in with the long swell crashing on either side. Presently she turned east, her propellers ceased their churning, and she drifted quietly on the glassy lagoon. The plunge of the anchor and the loud rattle of its chain violated the evening calm.

The Tara's men, even the Chinaman, all had friends and relatives ashore, and I told them to go where they wished that first night, asking them, at Brixton's request, to keep their mouths shut about the Sumbawa affair. The skipper took me ashore in his own boat and was kind enough to offer me the loan of a few pounds. I accepted thankfully, as I was not sure of finding my uncle's agent that night,

and there were many things I wished to buy before the Chinese shops closed. And I wanted to give Fatu and his men a little something to spend on this evening of home-coming. When the simple formalities of arrival were over, I went to call on the American consul, my uncle's good friend, and on his veranda with him I found old Mr. Jackson, director of the Atoll Trading Company, who looked after my uncle's affairs. Both men made much of me for my uncle's sake, and joined me in a stroll about the streets of the town as I did my very necessary shopping. The gayety I remembered so well was gone from Papeete's streets; the war and the absence of all men of military age had dampened the spirits of the inhabitants. But as we passed a modest restaurant, I saw Fatu at a table inside, surrounded by friends who kept his glass filled as he recounted with enormous animation the adventures of the past few months.

"Where are you going to put up, Charlie?" the consul was asking. "I wish I could ask you to the house, but we've so many youngsters that there's not a spare bed in the consulate."

"He's coming with me," put in Mr. Jackson, "eh, lad? And by the way, we must go down and open the office; there's a radio from Harry there."

The consul took leave of us and the old trader and I strolled along the waterfront to his store. Uncle Harry had received my message and dispatched a long reply in code. It instructed me to leave everything in Mr. Jackson's hands and to take the first steamer home.

"You can sail on the Tangaroa," the trader remarked; "she's due on Saturday."

"Are the servants still at Fanatea?" I asked. Fanatea was my uncle's plantation, twenty miles west of town.

"I suppose so — they draw their pay every month."

"Do you think Uncle Harry would mind if we invited the officers of the Regulus to dinner out there?"

"Not a bit — first-rate idea; they've been pretty decent to you. How about to-morrow night? I'll help you arrange things. Well, I reckon you could do with some sleep; let's go home."

An hour later, as I lay between fresh cool sheets scented with the pandanus flowers used in the South Seas as we use lavender at home, I was thinking of the Sumbawa, her cargo, the broken case, and Staub's murderous madness on Iriatai. I knew now that the little boxes contained bars of gold from the African mines, and it seemed clear that Staub, prying about in the derelict's hold, had become aware of the fact. Far from being mad, the German bosun must have been working out a cold-blooded plan. Seeing the boats depart, and knowing that in all probability his countrymen had marked his name on the list of dead, Staub must have determined to make himself the sole inhabitant of Iriatai, master of the Sumbawa's cargo, with no living sharer of the secret. No doubt he had broken open the case while the derelict was being towed into Iriatai Lagoon, and seeing his

half-formed schemes threatened by the approaching storm, he had boarded the ship in desperation, resolved to die on her, if necessary, rather than part with her in the hurricane. He must have climbed into her rigging when she struck the shoal and the seas broke over her decks, and remained there after she went down, until the lagoon was calm enough to let him swim to the islet, with the pistol and ammunition he clung to instinctively. The arrival of Ivi and Ofai in the canoe would have been the first sign that he was not alone on Iriatai — unless he saw the smoke of our fire. No doubt he questioned the unsuspecting native sailors and then slaughtered them like a brace of sheep. And the drinking-nuts in the bottom of the canoe probably saved him from a speedy death with thirst. My thoughts ran on . . . It was like fitting into place the last scattered bits of a picture puzzle. But finally, long after midnight, I fell asleep.

My week on Tahiti passed pleasantly and quietly. We had our little party at the plantation, where Mr. Jackson and the consul helped me to receive our guests. And back in the big outdoor kitchen the survivors of the Tara made merry with the people of Fanatea.

Saturday came at last, bringing the freighter which had replaced the fine passenger-ship now serving as a transport on the other side of the world. Fatu and old Pahuri and Lem and Marama came to the dock in a little group to say good-bye; the Chinaman

pressed into my hands a bag of lichi nuts — his parting gift. Sometime during the night, twenty-four steel-banded boxes had been hoisted aboard the Tangaroa to start their journey north.

The crowd waved listlessly as the ship cast off; they were saving their emotions for other ships, which would one day bring husbands and brothers home. As we steamed out of the passage and northwest at a scant ten knots, I watched Tahiti fade away astern without regret; those were stirring times, and I was eager to get home and take my own small part in them.

Fifteen days later we hove-to on a calm foggy morning off the Golden Gate. A handsome little schooner, on whose stern I read the pretty name, Adventuress, pitched and tossed in the swell close by; a boat put out with the pilot, and my heart seemed to skip a beat as I saw another man — a tall, sinewy man, wearing dark glasses and moving with the activity of a boy — spring up the ladder after him. Two minutes later I was wringing my uncle's hand.

I had a great deal to tell him after our lunch at his hotel, but there is no need of setting down what I said, for the story has been told. Our train for home would not leave till eight o'clock that night.

"How about enlisting?" I asked my uncle when we had yarned for a long time. "Do you think I can get into the army?"

He shook his head.

"I'm afraid not," he told me, "not now anyway —

not till you're eighteen. But there's plenty of time. This war will last long enough to give everyone his chance. Take it easy, look around, and make up your mind where you will fit in best."

"Wish I could get in myself," he went on gloomily, a moment later. "There's no hope, with these wretched eyes. But they're a lot better nowadays. I've been to a dozen doctors and they all tell me the same thing — the army would n't take me on a bet! Damn it! I can't loaf around up here like an old woman. Yes, I'm sailing on the Tangaroa next week. If I can't get to the war, I might as well go south, start building a new schooner, and try to patch things up on Iriatai."

Uncle Harry was not a profane man; when he used an oath, it was in the stress of real emotion. Knowing his character, I realized how deeply it hurt him to renounce all hope of getting to the front.

The joy of our arrival at the ranch and of seeing once more the faces of the people I loved best in the world have no part in this tale. But since it began with a telegram, it is fitting that it should end with another: a message which reached me early in that wartime summer, asking me to report, at my convenience, at the offices of the British Consul-General in San Francisco.

I wasted no time, and alighted from the night train on that memorable morning, just as my father and I had alighted one morning so many months before. After a leisurely breakfast and what I

considered a decent interval, my taxi stopped at the offices of the Consulate, and I was ushered into the presence of a dignified and friendly Englishman.

"Mr. Selden?" he asked pleasantly.

"Yes, sir, Charles Selden," I replied.

"I'm sorry," the Consul went on, "but my business with you requires a formal identification. Would you mind coming in this afternoon with two or three gentlemen prepared to vouch for your identity?"

I thought for a moment.

"Would Dr. Stimson do?" I asked. He was an old friend of my father's and his summer home was not far from our ranch.

The Englishman smiled.

"Perfectly," he said, "I've known him for years. But we must have two. Whom else can you think of?"

"How about Mr. Macdonald, the banker? He often comes to shoot at our place."

"Splendid."

I thanked him and was turning to go on my errand when he called me back. "See here," he said, with twinkling eyes, "I'm not very busy to-day. Take a chair yonder while I call them up. Macdonald's a good fellow, and I fancy the doctor has n't gone to the hospital yet."

He picked up a telephone to put in his calls, and presently I heard its faint buzz. Half an hour later my father's two friends were ushered in, a minute apart. They greeted the Consul, caught sight of me, and crossed the room to shake my hand.

"Hello, Charlie," said Mr. Macdonald, a short, stout man, with a head bald as an egg. "What are you doing up here?"

"I'll tell you about that presently," said the Consul with an air of mystery. "Would you two mind signing your names to this — it's a statement of how long you've known Charles Selden, and vouching for his identity."

The two names were signed. The Englishman folded the slip of paper carefully, opened his safe, stowed it away in a pigeonhole, and took from a little drawer an envelope of thick brown paper. It was sealed with three big red seals, and on the upper left-hand corner I saw the name of a great British underwriting firm.

"That's for you," said the Consul, handing me the envelope. "I fancy it contains a word of thanks, and remember, the British Empire's behind the people who are thanking you." He turned to the two Americans watching this little scene with puzzled looks.

"Do you know what this young man has done?" he went on. "There's no longer any secret about it, so I'm going to tell you. Down in the South Seas he found a missing ship, a derelict called the Sumbawa, and managed to get word to a British man-of-war. Her cargo, disguised as machinery, was in reality a shipment of gold from the Rand, bound for this country. Let's see — in your money it amounts to something over twelve million dollars."

The banker's dark eyes were sparkling with

interest. "And you found it, eh!" he exclaimed, turning to me. "Come! Let's see what's in the envelope!"

I opened my pocketknife and slit the thick paper. There was a folded slip of richly embossed stationery inside, bearing a few typed lines of appreciation, curt and dignified. And inside that I found still another slip — this one pink and frilled along one edge. I unfolded it under the battery of curious and friendly eyes. It was a draft for twenty thousand pounds.

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